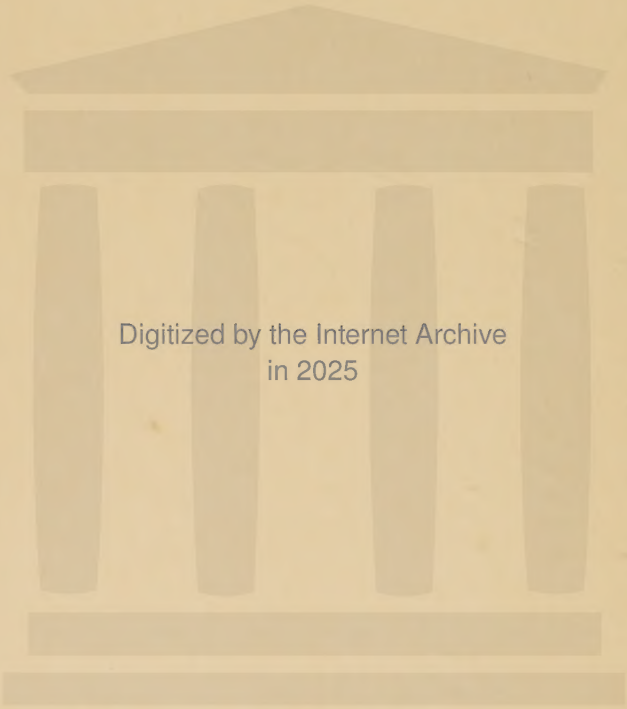
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Sketches for Sermons

FOR THE SUNDAYS AND HOLYDAYS
OF THE YEAR

BY

REV. R. K. WAKEHAM, S.S.
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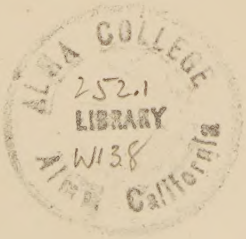
SECOND SERIES
CHIEFLY ON THE EPISTLES



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Author's Preface.

THE kindly and unexpected encouragement given to the series of Sermon Sketches on the Gospels has induced the writer to attempt a similar series on the Epistles of the Liturgical Year.* The dominant idea and the impelling motive have been the same. The desire to afford, as far as the writer was able, some useful aid to his busy brother Priests engaged in the arduous labors of the daily ministry.

The task was undertaken without any preconceived *plan,* that is, without attempting to map out a *set treatise* to bring out in formal progression the doctrine, dogmatic or moral, which a bright, analytic mind might easily find in these selections from the inspired writings of the Apostles.

The writer started with the simple *conviction,* cherished through all the years of his Priesthood, and even of his priestly training, that the Church had been wisely guided in making these selections, and causing them to be read to the people on the Sundays of the year. The selections having been thus authoritatively made, he believed, with loyal, unquestioning Faith, that each one of the Epistles *must contain* some practical and instructive lesson, albeit there were in them "certain things *hard to be understood*" (II. Pet. iii. 16).

He has, therefore, tried to find out one at least of the lessons contained in each Epistle. And the reader will observe that in no case has the lesson been drawn from *a single verse* or *sentence,* with little or no allusion to *the context.* On the contrary, an earnest effort has been made, *first,* to give, as far as circumstances required or permitted, the *historical setting,* or the facts and conditions which called forth the words of the inspired writers, following always the interpretation put upon them by the most conservative and reliable commentators. *Secondly,* an effort has been made to work in as much as possible of *the text* of the Epistle, in the hope of thereby making it more intelligible and more interesting to the pious faithful.

*In the present Series the Sketches for New Year's, Quinquagesima, and Low Sunday are on the Gospels, as Sketches on the corresponding Epistles are given in the First Series.

The writer is fully and sincerely conscious that the measure of his success in the task undertaken is very limited; yet he confesses to the belief that in the Sketches, or *suggestions* here offered, there will be found a certain sequence and progression of simple teaching of practical truths both moral and doctrinal; and that this teaching taken from the words of the first divinely commissioned teachers of the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, will be found to be identical with that which has been constantly given forth from the Catholic pulpit, in all ages, the world over.

In the Gospels of the Sundays, Our Lord Himself stands forth as *the Divine Teacher.*

In the Epistles it is the four Apostles, Peter, Paul, James, and John, who speak to us of "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, *of the* WORD OF LIFE" (I. John i. 1).

Surely after the words of Our Blessed Lord, we can find nothing truer, more persuasive and efficacious than the interpretation of His teaching as handed down to us by these great WITNESSES, who "preached the word, in season and out of season; reproving, entreating, and rebuking, *in all patience and doctrine*" (II. Tim. iv. 2).

Feast of All Saints, 1905.

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SKETCHES FOR SERMONS.

(*SECOND SERIES*)

FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

The Divine Example.

"After eight days were accomplished that the child should be circumcised, his name was called Jesus."—Luke ii. 21.*

Exordium.—The right of circumcision prescribed by Almighty God in His covenant with Abraham (Gen. xvii. 2, 10) became one of the strictest precepts of the Levitical Law (Lev. xii. 3). All males, whether Jewish born, slaves, or foreigners, were obliged to submit to it before they were allowed to partake of the Passover (Exod. xii. 48) or enjoy the rights of citizenship.

Our Lord was, of course, not obliged to submit to this law, but the early Fathers give several reasons why He did so. 1. To show that He had a really *human body,* thus refuting in advance those who would later on assert that His humanity was only *apparent,* not *real;* or that it was *one and the same* (*consubstantial*) *with His Divinity,* which implied that He was not subject to the laws of nature, and consequently could not and did not suffer; or that He brought *His body* (such as it was or whatever it was) *direct from heaven.* 2. In order to give His sanction or approval to the rite of circumcision, which had been divinely instituted. 3. That He might show that He was truly of the race of Abraham, and thus deprive the Jews of an excuse for rejecting Him. [For other

* For Sketch on the Epistle, see First Series.

reasons, cf. à Lapide in Luke ii. 21.] But the most evident and important reason of all was to give us *an example of obedience.*

I. The obedience of Christ. II. How we should imitate it.

I. The obedience of our Divine Saviour was foretold ages before He came: "Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire; . . . Then said I, Behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will. O my God, I have desired it, and thy law in the midst of my heart" (Ps. xxxix. 7-9; cf. Heb. x. 5-9). It was in obedience to mandate of Cæsar that He allowed Himself to be born in a stable and cradled in a manger. It was in obedience to the will of His Father, made known to St. Joseph by an angel, He was taken to the heathen land of Egypt (Matt. ii. 13, 14).

Returning to Nazareth, He was obedient to His mother and His foster father during His childhood and youth (Luke ii. 51). During His public ministry His Father's will was His constant thought and occupation. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, that I may perfect His work" (John iv. 34). Was obedient to the Mosaic law in every detail. "Do not think that I am come *to destroy* the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but *to fulfil*" (Matt. v. 17). Was obedient to the requirements of the civil law. Paid tribute for Himself and Peter (Matt. xvii. 26). He laid it down *as a principle* that *the civil law* should be obeyed: "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and to God the things that are God's" (Matt. xxii. 21). He submitted even to the unjust use of civil power. When Pilate said to Him, "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and I have power to free thee?" His answer was, "Thou shouldst not have any power against me, unless it were given thee from above" (John xix. 10, 11). And He submitted to the iniquitous sentence. "Father, not

my will, but thine be done" (Luke xxii. 42). "Obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8).

II. Such the divine example given us by our Blessed Lord, beginning with His birth and circumcision and ending on the cross. "He learned *obedience* by the things which He suffered. And being consummated He became *to all that obey Him* the cause of eternal salvation" (Heb. v. 8, 9).

Perfect and admirable order: Obedience to God. Obedience to the Levitical Law, which was primarily *religious.* Obedience to the Roman civil law of this time, which was merely *civil* and *human* —even *pagan.*

The lesson for all Christians: *God first,* for His commands can never be in conflict with any human law or mandate that is *just* and *moral.* A human law may have only a *human* or *temporal,* perhaps even a *selfish* or *unprofitable,* not to say *disastrous end.* Nevertheless, if it involves or threatens only *temporal* loss or inconvenience, and does not conflict with any duty or service which we owe to God, it must be obeyed, if it can not be *legitimately* abrogated.

In this sense St. Peter says, "Be ye subject to *every human creature, for God's sake;* whether it be to the king as excelling, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of the good; *for so is the will of God*" (I. Pet. ii. 13-15).

On the contrary, where the civil authority encroaches upon *the rights of God,* it is the Christian's duty to rise in all the courage and might of "the freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free" (Gal. iv. 31), and answer in the words of St. Peter, "We *must* obey *God* rather than *men*" (Acts v. 29). Obedience to the teachings and to the laws of the Church, which means, of course, obedience to the commands of God, whom the Church represents: "He that heareth

you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me" (Luke x. 16). Those who fail or refuse to obey the commands of the Church really have no right to call themselves *Christians,* i. e., *Believers in* and *Followers of* Christ. Useless to *believe* without *following.* Can not follow Christ, if we refuse to *hear* and to *follow* the teaching and guiding authority which He has established.

Obedience to civil authority. After the example of Our Lord. According to the injunction of St. Peter (ut supra). Same injunction and the same reason given by St. Paul: "Let every soul be subject to higher powers; for there is no power but from God; and those that are, are ordained of God. Therefore, he that resisteth the power *resisteth the ordinance of God"* (Rom. xiii. 1, 2).

Hence sincere, respectful, loyal obedience to *civil authority.* No wild, dishonest, impudent, anarchical opposition. No unjust abuse and calumniation of those in authority. Nothing more injurious to true patriotism than habitual disrespect for authority or its representatives.

Conclusion.—Appropriateness of the lesson taught by Our Lord for the beginning of the New Year. He may say to each one of us: "I have given you an example" (John xiii. 15).

Let each one cast a glance over the past year and see how far that example has been followed. Begin from *to-day* to make new and better efforts by striving to see the will of God in all things, and earnestly endeavoring to conform to it.

Fidelity and docility to the teachings and the requirements of Holy Mother Church. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James i. 22).

Honest, unflinching loyalty and obedience to the civil authority.

"These things speak and exhort in Christ Jesus our Lord," and the New Year will be a *happy* one.

OCTAVE OF THE EPIPHANY.

The Christian Life.*

"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, your reasonable service." —Rom. xii. 1.

Exordium.—These words originally addressed by St. Paul to the recently converted Jews and Gentiles in Rome.

A certain rivalry or contention had sprung up between these two classes, each claiming superiority over the other.

The Jews, on account of their law, which had, as if by right, brought them to the knowledge of Christianity.

The Gentiles claimed all the more credit for not having or knowing the Law, and yet coming to the knowledge of the true God, and of the Redemption, by their own learning and intelligence.

The Apostle, in the first chapters of his Epistle, shows both the contending parties that they had nothing to boast of, and that they owed their *call* solely to the *mercy of God.* It was His *free gift,* which they had by no means *merited.*

In the portion of his Epistle just read, he tells them what kind of life they must now live, *as Christians*:

They must realize that they *belong* wholly to God, and therefore must: 1. Offer their bodies a living sacrifice to Him. 2. Must undergo a thorough reformation of mind, rejecting the maxims of the world, and learning "what is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God."

The lesson clear, simple, and practical. Preeminently a sermon for all classes of people living in the world. And true for all time.

I. *"Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God."*

* See International Critical Commentary, Romans. Sanday.

We are the work of God's hands, and consequently we belong to Him, regardless of rank, station, or worldly possessions: "All things are yours. . . . And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's (I. Cor. iii. 22, 23).

God has made us for Himself and wishes to show forth His own glory in us; but not by dwarfing our being. He asks or requires nothing of us but what tends to the highest, most perfect development of our being, nothing but what tends to our permanent and most perfect happiness.

Those who seek other things than those which are "pleasing to God" find only bitterness, disappointment, death. "My people have done two evils. They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. ii. 13).

"If you live according to the flesh, you shall die; but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live," says St. Paul in this same Epistle to the Romans (viii. 13).

The Apostle also asks us to offer ourselves "a *living* sacrifice," *not* a *dead* sacrifice, as offered in the Old Law (cf. à Lapide).

The typical meaning of a sacrifice *immolated* or *consumed* is to acknowledge, in figure, the sovereign dominion of God.

But God desires something better, more real, more perfect.

"Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not; but a *body* thou hast fitted to me. Holocausts for sin did not please Thee. Then said I: Behold I come: in the head of the book it is written of me, that I *should do Thy will,* O God" (Heb. x. 5-7).

By these words our Divine Saviour gives us the model of the true Christian life. What He said to His disciples at the Last Supper may be applied in a broader sense: "I have given you an example, that, as I have done to you, so do you also" (John xiii. 15).

With our reason, our faith, or our free will, we can acknowledge, fully and without reserve, God's absolute dominion over our bodies and our whole being.

It is thus that we are to offer ourselves "a *living* sacrifice, holy, pleasing to Him, a reasonable service."

II. *"Be not conformed to this world, but be reformed in the newness of your mind."*

Very many persons evidently think that "respectability," material prosperity, social refinement, exterior decorum, sufficient to escape the hand of the civil law, or the censures of their fellow men, constitute the perfection of human life. They seldom, if ever, ask themselves, "What is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God?"

They conform to the spirit of the world. The habitual tendency of their mind, of their thoughts, is to reason upon all things independently of God, of His Revealed Word, of the Divine Teaching Authority that He has established on earth through and by His divine Son.

More willing to listen to any self-constituted teacher than to those commissioned by Our Lord to "go and teach all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20).

Are *not* "reformed in the newness of mind."

Are "*more* wise than it behoveth to be wise."

Are *not* wise unto sobriety, and according "as God hath divided to every one the measure of faith."

Conclusion.—Exhortation to lead a good, simple, moral life, *not* through worldly motives, but actuated by *religious principles* and *religious convictions*—by faith.

"Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, your reasonable service."

Exhortation to avoid the contamination of so-called worldly wisdom and worldly maxims. "Be not more wise than it behoveth to be wise. Be wise unto sobriety."

"Be not conformed to this world, but be reformed to the newness of your mind: that you may prove what is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God." Such is CHRISTIAN LIFE.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

The Right Use of Spiritual Gifts.

"We have different gifts, according to the grace that is given us."—Rom. xii. 6.

Exordium.—St. Paul has laid down what may be called *the general rule* of Christian life: "Offer your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God;" avoid self-conceit, and idle, dangerous inquiry into things that do not concern us, or are above our comprehension. "Be not more wise than it behoveth to be wise."

This, according to the inspired teacher, is what God expects, what God *has a right to demand.*

Perhaps some of his hearers (i. e., those to whom his letter was read in the "churches" of Rome) might have said, as others before them had said to our blessed Lord Himself: "This saying is hard, and who can hear it?" (John vi. 61); or as the "wicked and slothful servant": "Lord, I know that thou art a hard man; thou reapest where thou hast not sown, and gatherest where thou hast not strewed" (Matt. xxv. 24).

The Apostle forestalls any such objections or difficulties by quietly reminding us that all our powers of intelligence, all our good impulses, are *gifts of God,* given in different measure to each one, with an accompanying measure of grace to enable him to use them properly.

The words of to-day's Epistle are addressed to the new converts who have been entrusted with the exercise of the ministry, as well as to the body of the faithful.

The former are told in forcible terms how and in what spirit they are to discharge their various functions.

The latter, even more explicitly, and in detail, how they are to use the gifts and grace received from God, in order to live the true *Christian life.*

I. The Apostle speaks first of *Love of Neighbor,* "the second commandment of the Law." The sentiments we are required to cherish in our hearts and manifest in our relations with our fellowmen.

This love must be *sincere.* No hypocrisy or dissimulation.

But this love must *not* be blind or carnal—a love contaminated by sin, or of which sin would be one of the bonds.

On the contrary, we must *hate sin,* even in our dearest friend, and recognize and love virtue, good qualities, even in one who has great defects, which are specially offensive and annoying to us.

It is neither true love nor true friendship to condone an offense against God, much less to be a sharer in it.

This love should be truly *fraternal,* i. e., as among children of the same Father, and brothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanks to the successful teaching of the Apostles, this *brotherly love* soon became the distinctive mark of the early Christians, and was observed with astonishment by their enemies and persecutors. "See how they love one another, and are ready to die one for the other!" (Tertullian, contra Gentiles.)

Finally, this love should have no admixture of pride or relative superiority, but should be stimulated by mutual respect and sincere love of God. "With honor preventing one another," and "in spirit fervent, *serving the Lord.*"

II. The Apostle next speaks of the *interior* sentiments (he had been speaking of love with reference to its *exterior* manifestation

towards others) which should be the main-spring of our actions; the secret of Christian fortitude, power of resistance; perseverance in spite of trials, obstacles, and discouragement.

1. The Christian should always "*rejoice in hope*" of the sustaining grace of God, and of the final triumph and reward, knowing that "Nothing is wanting to *him* of any grace, waiting for the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I. Cor. i. 7).

2. Should be "*patient in tribulation,*" for "God is faithful, who will not suffer *us* to be tempted above that which *we* are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that *we* may be able to bear it" (I. Cor. x. 13).

3. The Christian should be "*instant* in prayer," i. e., persevering, regular, unfailing. For prayer obtains the daily bread of the soul, given bountifully by "Our Father in heaven."

III. With characteristic, almost impetuous earnestness, St. Paul reverts again to *fraternal duties*:

Charity to all those in need; "communicating to the necessities of the saints" (Sic S. Chrysostom et alii, apud à Lapide).

Sympathy with our neighbor, in joy and in sorrow, feeling for him as we would feel for ourselves, and as we would wish others to feel for us in like circumstances.

Forbearance, and even *forgiveness* towards those who persecute or calumniate. "Bless and curse not."

Leave punishment and retribution to God. "Revenge is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay" (Deut. xxxii. 35).

All this each one is able to do, and should do, "according to the grace that is given us."

Conclusion.—Dwell *briefly* (for it will be further developed and insisted upon later on) upon the sound and solid basis of Christian

morality here laid down by the great Apostle, so admirably and perfectly in harmony with the teachings of our Divine Saviour.

Exhortation.—To earnest attention to this sublime doctrine, and to earnest endeavor to put it in practice.

The Apostle himself promises to lead on those who are faithful into higher ways of perfection. "Be zealous for the better gifts, and I *will* show unto you yet a more excellent way" (I. Cor. xii. 31).

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Christian Peace and Harmony.

"Be not wise in your own conceits: to no man rendering evil for evil; providing good things, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men."—Rom. xii. 16, 17.

Exordium.—St. Paul has already told us (I. post Epiph.) the true object and end of Christian life; that, belonging entirely and solely to God, we should live to and for Him.

He has told us (II. post Epiph.) how we should use the spiritual gifts of God; what interior dispositions and virtues we should cultivate and practise, in order that we may comply with the holy will of God, by offering ourselves "a living sacrifice, pleasing to *Him.*"

To-day's Epistle contains another important and most practical lesson. If properly understood, it is simply this: Christians should strive to live *in Peace and Harmony.*

I. The Apostle repeatedly insists upon this in his Epistles to his various Christian communities, whom he loved with all the tenderness, ardor, and solicitude of a true disciple of our *loving Master.*

To the Corinthians, he says, "God is not the God of dissension, but of peace" (I. Cor. xiv. 33).

To the Galatians: "The fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience" (v. 22). "Bear ye one another's burdens; and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ. For if any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" (vi. 2, 3).

To the Ephesians: "With all *humility and mildness,* with patience, supporting one another in charity. Careful to keep the *unity* of the Spirit in *the bond of peace*" (iv. 2, 3).

To the Colossians: "Let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts, wherein also you are called *in one body*" (iii. 15).

As a last exhortation to the Romans: "Therefore let us follow after the things that are of peace" (xiv. 19).

The reason of his solicitude on this point should not be difficult to understand. The social bond is a necessary condition of man's life in this world. We do not, and cannot stand alone. We are not as trees or plants, each of which draws its nourishment, *separately* and *independently,* from the earth and the atmosphere; and which thrive the better when not in too close contact.

We not only have a mutual dependence upon one another, but as rational beings and Christians, we are bound together by the strongest ties under heaven.

We are not *strangers,* but *brothers;* children of *one Father, God,* "the Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all" (Eph. iv. 6).

II. What, then, is there to prevent this Christian peace and harmony? Two things: Man's misconception of himself, and his misconception of his duty and obligations toward his fellow men.

The Apostle strikes the key-note of the evil and its remedy: *"Be not wise in your own conceits."*

One of the several meanings of the word *conceit,* is, "A vain estimate of one's self."

This is evidently the meaning attached to it in Holy Writ: "Hast thou seen a man wise in his own conceit? There shall be more hope of a fool than of him" (Prov. xxvi. 12).

Such a one is concentrated all in self, knows the law of God, and keeps it—*for himself*—as the Pharisee did.

May be a "pillar of the church," sober, and honest, as the *respectable world* understands these terms. But he has never under-

stood the words of the Beloved Disciple: "Whosoever is not just, is not of God; *nor he that loveth not his brother.* He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall *shut up his bowels from him* (i. e., be cold, unsympathetic and indifferent toward him), how doth the charity of God abide in him?" (I. John, iii. 10, 17).

Such a man, however "respectable" and "independent," is a "barren fig tree;" and so much the worse for himself. We know our meek and gentle Saviour's appreciation (Matt. xxi. 18, 19).

If all men, or many men, were so disposed—living for self alone—how could they "fulfil the law of Christ"?

It is not by selfish, individual, rival effort that success is achieved in the world—that great enterprises are accomplished, great ends attained.

On the contrary, by *harmony,* unity of action, even the sacrifice for the time being of *individual,* personal interests or preferences, as seen in all commercial, political and municipal organizations. No wonder that our blessed Lord says: "The children of this world are wiser than the children of light" (Luke xvi. 8).

Mutual sympathy and *co-operation,* therefore, is what the Apostle means by "providing good things, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men."

"Let not *mercy* and truth leave thee; put them about thy neck, and write them in the tables of thy heart. And thou shalt find grace and good understanding before *God* and *men*" (Prov. iii. 3, 4).

III. The Apostle warns us against yielding to a spirit of resentment—"rendering evil for evil."

Clearly acknowledges that we may have great difficulty, at times, in bearing with the annoyances coming from the defects of others.

Hence the moderate and most reasonable injunction: "*If it be possible,* as much as is in you, *have* peace with all men."

May be necessary to avoid intimacy with certain persons. But these cases are exceedingly rare. Should not be easily or uncharitably supposed to exist.

When they actually do—no gossip; no recrimination; no effort or desire to "return evil for evil." On the contrary, should evil or misfortune overtake the one who has been unkind or unjust to us, we should not fail to go to his relief. "If thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he thirst, give him to drink," etc.

Conclusion.—St. Paul is evidently laying down no high or impossible law of Christian duty. The very same that our Holy Mother Church is constantly teaching.

Call attention to its eminently practical value, from the simplest and plainest point of view. "In union there is strength." The evil effect of dissensions. Scandal, disgrace, and contempt before the hostile or unbelieving world; consequent weakness and lack of influence to accomplish anything for the good of religion or the uplifting of ourselves and our fellow-men.

Exhortation to ponder well these things, bearing in mind the words of the Apostle which forcibly summarize our duty in our social relations.

"Be not wise in your own conceits; to no man rendering evil for evil; providing good things, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men."

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Summary of the Christian's Duty—Love the Fulfilment of the Law.

"He that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law."—Rom. xiii. 8.

Exordium.—In to-day's Epistle, St. Paul sums up all his previous advice and instructions to the Romans, in this one simple precept: "*Love* your neighbor; and you will faithfully fulfil all your duties to your fellow man, *and to God,*" for the law includes both. It includes, in fact, the substance of his teaching during his whole apostolate.

Writing, as he did, under divine inspiration, his doctrinal teaching to the early Christians is equally true in our own day, and for all time.

The precept which he gives is simple and brief. Was given in the Old Law (Lev. xix, 18). Was repeated in the New, by our Lord Himself (Matt. xxii. 39; Mark xii. 31).

Nevertheless, it is rejected *by many* as "a hard saying," and accepted with difficulty by *all.*

First, on account of the great difference between the ordinary worldly sense of the word *Love,* and the meaning attached to it in Holy Scripture.

Secondly, because it is not sufficiently well known that *Love,* in the Scriptural sense, is, as St. Thomas says, "The mother of all other virtues" (Prima Secundae, q. 62, 4).

I. Some of the most popular meanings of the word *love,* as employed in the language of the world:

Affectionate regard, which means a certain *attraction* toward one or more *particular individuals*—not toward *all our fellow beings.*

Friendship; which is *mutual esteem.* This exists *naturally* between certain individuals, but not between all men, indiscriminately. It goes no further than the heathen love, of which Our Lord said, "If you love (only) them that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans this?" (Matt. v. 46).

Perhaps the species of so-called *Love* upon which the greatest amount of false sentiment has been foolishly and fatally expended, is that impulsive unbridled passion—uncontrolled by reason, prudence, or any moral restraint—which causes so many young persons of both sexes to wreck their lives, thoughtlessly and waywardly, regardless of consequences. (If circumstances permit, a word may be said of this deplorable folly.)

Finally, *human love,* in general, is defined "A feeling or passion excited by *whatever is pleasing to us.*"

Certainly *all men* are *not* "pleasing to us." Yet, according to God's command, our love should extend to *all men.* It is thus evident that all the forms of what the world calls *love* are essentially *selfish.*

A greedy seeking after *self-gratification,* more or less intemperate and unbridled.

Hence the reason why it not unfrequently changes into coldness and indifference, and even to bitterest *hatred.*

In parental, and especially in *maternal* love, there is, of course, an inseparable bond of attraction which is unselfish, even though only human.

But with this single exception, may it not be truly affirmed that, where no higher motive than natural or human inclination exists, both *love* and *hatred* have a common object or impelling force—*self-gratification?*

Reflect, and appeal to inner consciousness for the answer. No wonder that when *love is* understood as the world seems to understand it, the command of God and the injunction of the Apostle are found to be difficult of fulfilment.

II. In Holy Scripture, the words *Charity* and *Love* are employed in absolutely the same sense, though in common usage the former frequently means, either alms-giving, or kindliness, gentleness, in manner and speech.

This secondary meaning naturally follows from the first, as "Love is the mother of all other virtues."

The *Love* which God commands us to have for our neighbor may be defined: "An habitual disposition of mind and heart, whereby we sincerely wish our fellow man, whoever he may be, to have and enjoy all the good, prosperity, and happiness which he may legitimately desire, and in the full measure of God's bounty to him. Just as we would wish the same for ourselves."

If we have this disposition toward our fellow-man:

1st. We will not envy him his happiness and prosperity.

2d. We will not defraud him of any part of it, by withholding from him anything that he has a right to.

3d. We will not injure him by committing any of the sins enumerated by St. Paul; for each of these is a grievous injustice to our neighbor.

4th. In fine, we will not do anything to him, in thought, word, or deed, that we would not wish another to do to us.

Evident, therefore, that the love of which the Apostle speaks, and which God commands us to cherish, is not a fickle, capricious impulse of the human heart seeking its own gratification.

On the contrary, it is a sentiment founded upon a correct sense of *right* and *justice*. It is an habitual desire, and per-

fect willingness to satisfy the claims of both, always, and at all times.

III. The truth of the Apostle's assertion now evident: "He that loveth his neighbor, hath fulfilled the law." Evident also that it is not beyond our power.

Owe no man anything, but to love one another. All other debts can be paid. The debt of *love* can never be cancelled. It continues as long as life itself.

"Love I always owe," says St. Augustine; "and it is the only debt which, when paid, still holds me debtor. Love I willingly give, and gladly receive. When I receive it, I still ask it; and when I pay it, I still owe it" (Epist. lxii. ad Celest.).

Conclusion.—Exhortation to form a correct estimate of what the world calls *love;* to curb its evil inclinations, and dread and flee from its terrible consequences. Direct attention to the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, as a most efficacious means of eradicating or at least overcoming those defects, which are the real obstacles to acquiring true *love of neighbor.*

"Let us love, not in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (I. John iii. 18).

"The love of our neighbor worketh no evil. Love, therefore, is the fulfilling of the law."

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

Christ Our Only Mediator.

"All whatsoever you do, in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."—Col. iii. 17.

Exordium.—Circumstances that led to the writing of the Epistle to the Colossians. (See Fouard, "Last Years of St. Paul," chap. iii.)

Colossae, a little town in Phrygia, Asia Minor. St. Paul had never visited it, though he had been in the neighborhood. But its inhabitants had been converted to Christianity by one of his zealous disciples, Epaphras.

Like the Galatians and other new converts, they were soon besieged by false teachers, pagans as well as Jews.

Many errors, some exceedingly degrading (Fouard, ibid., p. 48), were being actively disseminated among them. But the one which struck most directly at the very root of Christianity was concerning the *mediatorship* between God and man.

Some of these false teachers claimed that, as in the earlier times, so still at the present, the chief *mediators* were *angels,* and *not Christ.*

St. Paul was a prisoner in Rome when the sad news was brought to him by the faithful Epaphras.

Immediately wrote his beautiful and vigorous Epistle, sending it by two trusty messengers (Tychicus and Onesimus, Col. iv. 7-9), and directing that it be read to the Colossians, and also to the neighboring Christians of Laodicea.

While incidentally denouncing and refuting the other errors, he

devotes his chief attention to the one concerning the *mediatorship*. Proves in strongest and clearest terms that *not angels,* but *Christ alone,* the *Son of God,* is our MEDIATOR.

Such is, and ever has been the teaching of the Catholic Church.

I. Christ alone our Mediator.

Such has been the will of God the Father, from all eternity.

"For in him (Christ) were all things created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. . . . And he is before all, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the Church; . . . that in all things he may hold the primacy. Because in him it hath well pleased *the Father* that all fulness shall dwell. And through him to *reconcile* all things *unto himself,* making *peace* through the blood of his cross, both as to the things that are on earth, and the things that are in heaven" (Col. i. 16-20).

Through the cross alone was our redemption accomplished, the price of our ransom paid.

To the cross was nailed "the handwriting of the decree that was contrary to us" (Col. ii. 14).

II. The Catholic Church has ever taught the *sole mediatorship of Christ.*

Teaches unceasingly the doctrines of redemption and atonement *by Him.*

Teaches that the Sacraments, channels of grace, were instituted *by,* and have all their efficacy *from Him.*

That *all remission of sin* is by *His power* (conferred upon His priests) and through *His merits.*

Her every prayer is offered, and every petition made, "Through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The faithful hear it every day from the lips of the priest: *Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum.*

Refute objection made to the honor and invocation of the saints.

We *honor* them because they are *the friends of Our Lord,* and because He Himself has honored them.

Because we *admire them.* Because they are *models* worthy of our imitation. Because they are *moral heroes.*

Why should the Church be blamed for teaching us to do this? What is there wrong or unreasonable in it?

Patriotism and other civic virtues—emulation of every laudable kind—are being constantly engendered and stimulated by the same means—by *models* held up for our admiration and imitation.

Has this ever been condemned? Meaning of *Temples of Fame? Statues* and *monuments* in public places?

But *Invocation?* It is not derogatory to the *mediatorship* of Christ, to ask the prayers or intercession of the saints?

How, or *why?* The saints are *not invoked* as having any power *of themselves* to grant us anything.

We ask them *as friends of Christ,* to obtain for us *from Him* what we desire: The Blessed Virgin herself no exception.

Show our prayer books, the breviary, or priest's prayer book, the Mass-book, used on the altar, the ritual, or prayer book used in visiting the sick and burying the dead.

Every single prayer has the same termination: *Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum,* or *Per Christum Dominum nostrum.* Is it derogatory to the authority or dignity of the President of the United States to try to obtain a favor, *which he alone can give,* through the mediation of a Congressman or other influential person?

Do those who have recourse to this legitimate and common-sense means imagine they will obtain what they desire *without the full consent* of the President?

Does any one find it either foolish or *morally wrong* to have re-

course to the *honest* influence of a person more influential than himself?

This prejudice against the honor and invocation of the saints, not only *glaringly inconsistent,* but positively *unchristian.*

It cuts off that consoling relationship which should exist between those still living on earth and their fortunate fellow beings who have gone before, *to eternal life.*

Conclusion.—Exhortation to reflect upon this teaching by the Apostle, so faithfully followed by the Church.

It is plain, simple, reasonable. Any Christian should be ashamed to be ignorant of it. Any Catholic should be ashamed to allow the teaching of the Church to be misrepresented.

A word of warning in regard to *special devotions.* In honoring or invoking any particular saint—even our blessed Mother herself—let it be distinctly remembered that Our Lord Jesus Christ "is *before all,* and *by Him* all things consist."

Final exhortation to *purity of intention* in all actions, i. e., the habitual desire and will to do nothing which may not be referred to God and meet with His approval.

The Christian has no right to act as though there were *no God,* or as if God did not take account of *all* our rational or responsible acts.

"All whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

The Gift of Faith.

"We give thanks to God for you all, making a remembrance of you in our prayers without ceasing; being mindful of the work of your faith."—I. Thess. i. 2, 3.

Exordium.—A rather unusual note of joy and congratulation in these words of St. Paul. There was a special reason for it.

Only a short time before writing this Epistle, he had himself preached the Gospel in Thessalonica, making a number of converts, nearly all of whom, however, were pagans (Fouard, "St. Paul," vol i., 128).

The Jews opposed him bitterly while he was there, and after his departure spread the vilest calumnies against him, trying at the same time, by argument, persuasion, and persecution, to undo his work (Fouard, ibid., 169).

But the new converts remained firm and loyal to the faith, and these glad tidings were brought to St. Paul at Corinth by Timothy (I. Thess. iii. 6, et à Lapide in I. Thess.). Hence the letter of congratulation.

The true reason of the apostle's joy was that his preaching had not been in vain, that his Gospel had not been "in word only, but in power also, and *in the Holy Ghost.*" In a word, the Thessalonians had really *received the faith,* and were holding firmly to it.

Well to consider to-day: I. What faith is, and how it is received. II. How, or in what disposition it was received by the Thessalonians. III. The evil of abandoning the faith when once received.

I. Faith is a *supernatural gift* of God, enlightening the mind,

and disposing it to assent firmly, *on the authority of God Himself,* to all that He has revealed.

Resting thus on the *divine authority—truth itself*—it can not admit of doubt.

It is not *mere opinion,* which is essentially *uncertain,* and varies with the evidence or impressions upon which it is based.

It is not *emotional fervor,* or supposed *"private illumination"* obtained by casual reading of the Holy Scriptures.

It is not *belief* founded on *human knowledge,* even though that knowledge should be the greatest that human reason can acquire (Cf. Tanquerey, Theol. Dogmat., 9, 13, 14).

Faith, therefore, is a *gift* that comes *from* God. It can not be acquired by any *unaided* effort of human reason. No man can ever *merit* it.

God, out of pure bounty and mercy, turns this light into the human soul *when* He pleases and *as* He pleases.

Our Holy Mother Church teaches, and commands us to believe, that this *divine light* is *poured into* the soul of the child in Baptism, there to remain as a *supernatural power,* to aid its reason, when sufficiently developed, in comprehending *the things of God.*

In the case of adults, God may, and does, when He pleases, pour this same *light* into the soul of a wicked profligate—just as He gave the grace of repentance and the crown of eternal life to the thief on the cross.

Or He may in an instant cause the scales of error and darkness to fall from the eyes of the fiery zealot warring against the *truth,* and make of him a peerless champion of the very cause which he had sworn to vanquish. Such the case of St. Paul himself.

In general, we may reasonably suppose that, in His own good time, He bestows this priceless gift upon *all* who are *sincere in their*

convictions, and "who show the work of *the law written in their hearts,* their conscience bearing witness to them" (Rom. ii. 15).

But of one thing we may be sure: He does *not* give it to those who are "vain in their thoughts" (Rom. i. 21).

Who imagine themselves wise and learned enough to sit in judgment upon all creeds, upon the Bible, upon the nature and attributes of God Himself, and to choose at will what they will believe and what they will reject. "God resists the proud" (James iv. 6).

II. Show how beautifully the conduct of the Thessalonians stands out in contrast with such dispositions as these, and how faithfully they corresponded to the first grace of their vocation—*the gift of faith.*

First: Hearing the word from those who *had been sent,* they received it into their hearts, and gave to it the firmest assent of their intelligence.

Secondly: Openly professed their Christian faith, in spite of opposition and persecution.

Thirdly: Their convictions were not acquired merely by the acuteness of their natural intelligence, nor had they adhered to them by dint of mere human will power or stubborn, fanatical persistency. It was the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God, that had enlightened their minds, strengthened their wills, and filled their hearts with joy.

All this clearly said or implied in the words of St. Paul: "Our Gospel hath not been unto you *in word only,* but in power also, and in the Holy Ghost. And you became followers of us, and of the Lord, receiving the word in much tribulation, with joy of the Holy Ghost" (I. Thess. i. 5, 6).

A striking lesson for those who have received the faith, and also for those who have not.

III. St. Paul's praise of the Thessalonians stands as a lasting reproach to those who, having received the gift of faith, have not the courage to profess and practise it.

"It had been better for them, not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it, to turn back from the holy commandment which was delivered to them" (II. Pet. ii. 21).

What can they gain by denying or abandoning the faith?

Can they hope to find any shorter or surer way to eternal life? Or do they deliberately choose to consign themselves to eternal perdition? "Thou hast forsaken me, saith the Lord, thou art gone backward: and I will stretch out my hand against thee, and I will destroy thee" (Jer. xv. 6).

Shame on the father or the mother who through lack of courage or through human respect, or slothfulness and self-indulgence, falls away from the faith in which he or she was born.

Heritage of evil left to the children and the children's children of such renegade parents.

Generations lost to the faith through the sin of *one.*

"Thou hast forgotten the law of thy God: I also will forget thy children" (Osee iv. 6).

Shame on the child, son or daughter, who denies the faith received in Baptism, and nurtured during childhood and youth, by good Christian example and instruction.

Trading off a heavenly birthright for a mess of miserable pottage.

Our gentle Lord Himself pronounces a terrible malediction upon such apostasy: "He that shall deny me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God" (Luke xii. 9).

Conclusion.—Exhortation to appreciate the priceless value of the gift of faith. To realize that it *is* a gratuitous *gift of God,* to which

no one has a right, and which is utterly beyond the power of human reason or human effort to obtain.

To avoid whatever may lead to a loss or a weakening of the faith.

Gratitude on the part of those who have been born in the faith, or have been brought into the possession of it by the grace of God. Exhortation to be firm in the profession and practice of it.

"Wherefore, I beseech you," says the great apostle, "be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ" (I. Cor. iv. 16).

Heeding this earnest exhortation, they will, like the Thessalonians, in spite of tribulations, experience the inward "joy of the Holy Ghost," and will obtain the reward promised by our blessed Saviour: "And I say to you, whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man confess before the angels of God" (Luke xii. 8).

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

The Crown of Eternal Life.

"Every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things: they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one."—I. Cor. ix. 25.

Exordium.—Note the connection between to-day's Epistle and those of the preceding Sundays, from the beginning of the New Year. They all represent the efforts of St. Paul to spread the Faith, and instruct those who received it.

Remarkable sequence, revealing a model plan. His first effort was to make his hearers understand the Christian idea of God,—Our Father, not the stern Jehovah, whose wrath the Jews had so often provoked.

Next he explains to them how the Christian should live in consequence of God's sovereign dominion over us; tells them they can do all this by making proper use of the gifts and graces received from God, and *not* otherwise. Urges upon them the obligation and importance of the Precept of Charity.

Explains to them the mediatorship of Christ; and exhorts them to *Firmness* in *Faith.*

Admirable course of instructions, which were given and repeated in the various Christian communities by the zealous disciples and co-workers of St. Paul.

The good seed abundantly sown; much good fruit the result. Not surprising, however, that recent converts, especially from Paganism, and under pagan influences, should not fully understand their full duty as Christians.

Still less surprising when we remember how within the last three centuries St. Paul has been falsely represented as teaching the doctrine of *Justification by Faith alone,*—without good works.

Ancient Corinth had been utterly destroyed by the Romans about a century and a half before the coming of Our Lord.

A century later Caesar sent a colony of Italian ex-slaves to rebuild it. These were joined by other pagans of no better social standing, who found under the protection of Rome, and with the favorable situation of Corinth, on the high road of commerce, exceptional opportunities for *material success,* which amongst a godless population always favors moral degradation. Such precisely the condition in Corinth. (Cf. Fouard, " St. Paul," i., chap. vii., 158-160.)

It was in such surroundings that St. Paul made his first converts. They embraced Christianity, received the Faith; but did not avoid the contamination of the manifold vice in which the city was steeped.

This condition of things called forth from the ever-vigilant apostle the Epistle in which he clearly sets forth the doctrine that those only may hope to obtain the crown of Eternal Life who make *earnest effort* in doing good, and *mortify* or *restrain* their passions.

I. *Earnest effort.*—Remark the striking similarity in this instance between St. Paul's manner of teaching and that of Our Lord; taking illustration and argument from familiar scenes. The foot-race and all other athletic contests were of very frequent occurrence in Corinth. (Cf. à Lapide in loco, v. 25.)

In all merely earthly enterprises, effort, exertion, energy, are known to be the price of success.

To win a race there must be training, exercise, the enduring of fatigue, care to develop strength and swiftness.

In the actual contest all these powers must be exerted to their utmost limit.

Same and even more in other athletic contests: Fasting, dieting, laborious and fatiguing exercises,—all to increase skill and efficiency in action, and to increase the power of endurance.

In every walk of life where some serious or important object is to be attained there is energy, enterprise, competition, thought, preoccupation, labor night and day.

"Every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things"—and this to gain only "a *corruptible* crown," an uncertain, deceptive, perishable good.

In such a contest, all the means devised by human prudence may fail. Even granted the fullest measure of success, how long will it last? What will it all amount to? How long will the victor live to enjoy his triumph?

II. St. Paul, the model for all Christians, strives for a better prize, an *incorruptible* crown.

Runs no *uncertain* race. He believes all that he has taught, about the mediatorship of Christ, the *plentiful* Redemption, the *Fatherly* goodness and mercy of God.

Yet he knows also the weakness of man; his proneness to sin; the strong and incessant warring of the *flesh* against the *spirit*. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary one to another" (Gal. v. 17).

To yield to these solicitations of our lower nature is *death:* "If you live according to the flesh, you shall *die;* but if by the spirit you *mortify* the deeds of the flesh, you shall *live*" (Rom. viii. 13).

III. The apostle practises what he preaches; not only energy, earnest effort in the race, but also *mortification, self-restraint*. "I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection; lest perhaps when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway" (I. Cor. ix. 27).

Simply follows the injunction of his divine Master, whom he so ardently loves: "If any man will come after me, let him *deny himself,* and *take up his cross,* and follow me" (Matt. xvi. 24).

Remembers the words of Our Lord to those who gloried in the wonders and miracles they had wrought in His name, but who had *not* followed Him, by mortification and self-restraint: "Then will I profess unto them, *I never knew you*" (Matt. vii. 22, 23).

"Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that *doth the will of my Father* who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Ibid. vii. 21).

The apostle reminds his Jewish converts, and also those who might still be opposing the Faith, that their forefathers had, by their obstinacy, slothfulness, and self-indulgence, incurred the anger of God, and paid the penalty, in spite of all that He had done for them.

Conclusion.—Most evident: Faith *alone,* without *good works,* not sufficient to gain the crown of eternal life. Even *external* works, however good, not sufficient, without personal holiness and purity of life. God can not be *bribed,* or *bought off.*

Sad illusion of those who think that by giving generously and largely of their worldly possessions, they may dispense themselves from complying with the commandments of God, and of His Holy Church: "If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, . . . and have not *charity* (i. e., that love of God which impels and enables us to keep His commandments), it profiteth me nothing" (I. Cor. xiii. 3).

Exhortation.—Avoid slothfulness, negligence; indulgence of the cravings of the flesh. Chastise the body and bring it into subjection. Imitate the energy, perseverance, self-denial of those who strive for an earthly honor or recompense. "So run that you may obtain"—*the crown of eternal life.*

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

St. Paul's Vindication of Himself and His Apostolate.

"Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God."—I. Cor. iv. 1.

Exordium.—The lengthy Epistle just read will doubtless be variously understood, or rather *mis*-understood. Some may be short-sighted, or irreverent enough to suppose that the great apostle was simply in *a scolding humor.* Others, with still less sense of reverence, but not lacking in self-conceit, might possibly condemn him as guilty of *egotism,—vain boasting.* Men are strangely inclined to condemn their own faults in others.

Those of simple Faith and piety will give glory to God for getting him out of so many dangers, and will be carried away in ecstasy in picturing him taken up "to the third heaven."

Lastly, the seriously and prudently intelligent and reflective will ask with earnest and reverential desire to know the truth, "What does it all mean?"

Fortunately, the question is not a difficult one; and the answer will rejoice the heart of every honest, sincere Christian. It is simply this: Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, a dispenser of the mysteries of God, is telling vile calumniators, and weak, backsliding Christians, that he considers it "a very small thing to be judged by *them* or by any *human tribunal*" (I. Cor. iv. 3; cf. à Lapide in loco).

Not through any personal motive, but purely and solely for the good of souls who were being led astray, and for the honor and glory of God he refutes the calumnious charges made against himself personally; proves the genuineness of his call to the apostolate;

and with characteristic frankness and sincerity, confesses his own human weakness. What could appeal more strongly to our Christian sympathies? Hear the story:

I. St. Paul had troubles from the beginning in Corinth, as in other missions, owing partly to the ignorance and fickleness of the new converts (Cf. I. Cor. iv.). Still more on account of the opposition of the Jews, and the immoral influence of the Pagans. His first letter to the Corinthians had brought him consolation that moved him even to tears. (Fouard, St. P., vol. i. 294-5.) But with these glad tidings, came also the news (brought by Titus) that the fury and malice of the Jews had reached a higher pitch than ever.

Not only reviling and calumniating him, but using violence and intimidation against his beloved converts. Resorting to robbery and personal outrage? Naturally, some of the less sturdy weakened in their allegiance to him, and to the Faith.

Accusations made against him: He was not an apostle at all. Had never seen Christ. Was not acknowledged or accredited by Peter and the others. Was an impostor, a fool, and a madman. A swindler, obtaining money *for himself,* under false pretenses. Was *a coward,* afraid to come back to Corinth; but writing haughty and imperious letters from a safe distance. Was a loud talker, but small in stature, and contemptible in personal appearance. (Fouard, ibid. 295-6; II. Cor., x. 10.)

II. His reply: In the beginning of his Epistle (chaps. i., ii.) he pours out the affection of his large and noble heart to his faithful neophytes (Fouard, i. 295). But now, returning a second time to the evils which had aroused his righteous indignation, he first answers the weaklings, backsliding converts, in a tone of rather severe irony: "You gladly suffer the *foolish,* whereas *you* yourselves *are wise.*"

What more evident folly than for men, *in the name of religion,* to act as their false leaders had acted? What further from wisdom than to submit to their outrages, and to be persuaded by them to lose confidence in St. Paul?

Answering his calumniators, he, with scathing sarcasm, pretends to *speak foolishly,* for the sake of *coming down to their level.* He abhors boasting; but since *they boast,* he will *speak the truth of himself:*

If they glory in being Hebrews, Israelites, seed of Abraham, so is he; and who can deny it, or say aught against him? If they *falsely* claim to be "ministers of Christ," it is almost a greater degree of folly on his part to take the trouble to say that he has more right to be considered such.

If they claim he is an impostor, swindler, seeker of his own interests, where is the proof of it in his labors, imprisonments, brutal scourgings, shipwrecks, hunger, cold, nakedness—not to speak of his apostolic labors, performed without compensation, "laboring with *his* own hands?" (I. Cor. iv. 12). If they accuse him of not being a true apostle, of not having seen Christ, he does not speak of his miraculous conversion, but does violence to his noble nature in speaking of other favors which he had received from God—the fruits of which are abundantly evident in his ministry and in his letters (à Lapide, II. Cor. xii. 4).

Difficult to conceive a more noble, triumphant vindication.

III. Utter absence of vain boasting. Does not glory in the favors received from God, or in the power that has been conferred upon him. Not in the work he has done, nor in the trials and sufferings he has undergone, nor in his hairbreadth escapes.

Glories in nothing but his *infirmities.*

Here teaches a sublime lesson: The weaknesses of the flesh are

a safeguard against pride. True for all; priests and people. God will not allow any one to be tempted beyond his strength. "My grace is sufficient for thee; for power is made perfect in infirmity."

How closely he brings himself to his people by this honest avowal.

In perfect conformity with his idea of the priest, given in a later Epistle: One "who can have compassion on them that are ignorant, and that err; for he himself also is compassed with infirmity" (Heb. v. 2).

Conclusion.—Exhortation to an ardent love for this great apostle, and profound reverence for his inspired teaching.

Thanks to God for the faithful ministers He has ever given to His Church.

Warning against false teachers, and the false maxims of the world.

A word of congratulation to the people, on their Faith, and their loyal devotion to their priests. Whatever their faults and infirmities may be, the words of St. Paul should always be remembered, by both priests and people. "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God."

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Spiritual Blindness: Its Causes and Its Remedy.*

"And Jesus said to him: Receive thy sight; thy faith hath made thee whole."—Luke xviii. 42.

Exordium.—Miracles of restoring sight to the blind were of frequent occurrence during Our Lord's public life on earth. (Cf. Matt. xi. 5; xxi. 14; and for special cases, besides the one mentioned in to-day's gospel, cf. Matt. xii. 22; xx. 30; John ix. 7.)

Not strange that it should have been so. Cases of blindness numerous in the East. Natural causes for it: Dryness of the climate, with consequent dust. Habits of the people, sleeping for the most part in the open air, etc. (Cf. Trench on Miracles, No. 8.)

Not strange, therefore, that in Holy Scripture this malady, of such frequent occurrence, should be selected as the *type* of *Spiritual Blindness* or *Sin.*

The physical infirmity is, however, *only a type.* It is neither *a consequence* of sin, nor *an evidence* of its existence: Our Lord Himself has told us this, when speaking of a man born blind: "Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John ix. 3).

The same may, of course, be said of the greater part of the temporal afflictions and physical infirmities that befall man. God permits them in order to try our patience and make us feel our dependence upon Him; to test our faith, and then to "make manifest

* For sketch on the *Epistle* of the day, see First Series of Sketches: Charity the Greatest of all Virtues.

his works in *us.*" Oftentimes these afflictions are a positive protection against *sin,* the greatest and only real evil that can befall us.

The gospel of to-day teaches us an important lesson in regard to *spiritual blindness,* its *causes* and its *cure.*

I. *Spiritual blindness* may be said to be a condition of mind and will which prevents a person from *seeing either* essential truths of revelation sufficiently well to embrace them *or* the fatal folly of sin clearly enough to avoid it.

Various classes of persons afflicted with *spiritual blindness:*

1. *Rationalists,* who imagine they can see and know all necessary truths by the feeble light of human reason. Reject as false or absurd all that *reason* is unable to explain. Yet inconsistently admit *as facts* many phenomena in the material world which confessedly baffle human science.

2. Those who deny the existence of *a personal God,* and vainly strive to explain the existence and admirable order of the universe, while their explanation of the existence of *moral evil* destroys the *moral law*—and consequently all *human responsibility.*

3. Those who call themselves *Agnostics*—religious "know-nothings." Who claim that God, *if there is a God,* is *unknowable.*

4. The poor heathens, immersed in ages of ignorance and idolatry. Who have "changed the glory of the *incorruptible God* into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man, and of birds, and of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things" (Rom. i. 23).

5. Those who, though Christians, have been born and raised in error and prejudice. Finally, those who, though born in the true faith, have either lost it or fallen away from the practice of it, or even, while endeavoring to practise it, are really *spiritually blind* in regard to the well-being of their soul.

II. *Causes of spiritual blindness:*

Bearing in mind the words of our blessed Lord, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents," it is not for us to assign the cause *in individual cases.* That must be left *to God alone,* "the searcher of hearts" (Ps. vii. 10).

But the error of those who constitute a class, and would even be *leaders of thought,* may be pointed out:

1. *Pride of intellect*—in the case of those who make *reason* the measure and limit of their knowledge and assent. They would number the stars, and the sands of the seashore; bail out the ocean with a spoon, or span it with a bridge of a single arch. "*Their* thought is perverse: as if the clay should think against the potter; and the work should say to the maker thereof: Thou madest me not" (Isa. xxix. 16).

2. *Turning away from God.* The sad condition of those who either deny His existence or confess that they can not *see* that there is *a personal God.* They can not approach Him, because the first condition is "to *believe* that he *is,* and is a rewarder to them that seek him" (Heb. xi. 6).

Perhaps they have lived as did God's chosen people of old: "My people have done two evils. They have forsaken ME, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, *broken cisterns,* that can hold no water" (Jer. ii. 13).

3. *The rejection or abuse of grace.* Such apparently the case with *heathen nations.* For "the grace of God hath appeared to *all men*" (Titus ii. 11).

Our Lord Himself seems to have foreseen this, and to have pronounced the condemnation: "Whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off even the dust of your feet for a testimony against them" (Luke ix. 5).

Others, after receiving the faith, have fallen away: The flourish-

ing Churches of Africa—Carthage, Alexandria, even Hippo, the See of the great St. Augustine. The converts of St. Francis Xavier in Japan. The heroic, but, for the most part, fruitless labors of missionaries and martyrs in China.

4. *Lack of Courage.* It is to be *hoped,* and even *believed,* that many of those born under the blight of heresy—poor *foundlings,* who have lived and died without knowing their *true mother*—have, by following faithfully "the lights that were given them," found mercy and salvation.

But, alas! there are many others to whom *the grace of doubt* has been given; but the sincerity and courage were lacking to cry out, "Lord, that I may see!"

They have felt themselves sinking, and have been blessed with the vision of our blessed Lord walking on the fathomless deep, about to engulf them, and yet they had not the *faith* and *sincerity* of Peter to cry out as he did: "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee" (Matt. xiv. 28). For all these, we are bound in charity to pray.

5. Special are the causes for *spiritual blindness* in those who belong to the household of the faith; and they are easily pointed out: Waywardness and indolence in youth; neglect and bad example on the part of parents. Neglect of the Sacraments; habits of sin; going out of one's natural associations, for the sake of *social prestige;* deliberate stifling of the voice of conscience.

All these circumstances, or influences, more injurious to the *sight of the soul* than are the worst physical conditions in Eastern countries to the bodily eyesight. The victims of these circumstances do not suspect the gradual loss of *spiritual sight.* Blindness soon comes upon them, and still they are unconscious of it.

None bolder, more presumptuous, better satisfied with themselves than those who are thus *spiritually blind.*

III. *The cure.* Only one, and the same *for all:* FAITH in OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. Full realization of His *Divinity,* His *indispensable* MEDIATORSHIP: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me" (John xiv. 6).

The one cry: "Lord, that I may see!"

"That I may see further than the poor, dim light of my reason can reach."

"That I may see my own weakness, ignorance, childish vanity, my impotence and nothingness. My utter lack of hope for anything *worthy of man*—save in *Thee alone!* O Lord, that I may *see* how I have abandoned my Father's house, squandered my substance, and am now feeding upon the husks of swine."

Conclusion.—Exhortation to pray earnestly for those who have never seen *the light of truth;* who have never known *the gift of faith.* To pray for the poor heathen, the *ward of the Church,* the special beneficiary of the work of "the propagation of the faith."

A strong, but gentle and considerate, admonition to negligent Catholics who cut themselves off from the blessings of their birthright.

Remind them of our blessed Lord's sad but loving admonition: "He that shall deny me before men, I will also (be obliged to) deny him before my Father, who is in heaven" (Matt. x. 33).

All affected with more or less blindness in regard to their defects. Exhortation to all, therefore, to repeat frequently the prayer of the blind man: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! Lord, that I may see!"

Encouragement to all to hope to receive the same answer: "Receive thy sight; thy *faith* hath made thee whole."

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

How to Spend Lent Properly.

"We do exhort you that you receive not the grace of God in vain."—II. Cor. vi. 1.

Exordium.—The Lenten season, a time of *Penance* and *Mortification,* or *Self-restraint.* Penance, in atonement for past offenses against the law of God. Mortification, for the same purpose, and also to acquire *spiritual* or *moral* strength; i. e., to obtain control of the *will* and mastery over the *passions,* bringing them, as far as possible, into subjection to the will of God as expressed in the Commandments, and in the precepts and example of our divine Saviour.

The accomplishment of this is, of course, the work of the *will,* aided by divine grace. But the will itself gradually gains strength by acts of self-restraint, just as the strength of the body may be rapidly and wonderfully increased by physical exercise.

Our Holy Mother Church proposes, as means to attain this end, 1. *Fasting* and *Abstinence,* on certain days for those who are able to observe the fast without serious detriment to their health, or interference with the discharge of their daily duties. 2. *Prayer,* from which no one can reasonably claim exemption. Meditation upon the great mystery of the redemption, the manner in which it was accomplished; the enormity of sin which made such a terrible atonement necessary. 3. A becoming restraint in regard to certain worldly amusements which ill accord with the serious following of Our Lord through the tragic mystery of His Passion and death.

These means will naturally dispose the soul to realize more fully its obligations toward God, and to make greater efforts to fulfil them.

Hence the epistle of to-day opportunely reminds us of some of those obligations.

I. Of giving *Good Example:* "Giving no offense to any man, that *our ministry may not be blamed.*"

As in Rom. xii. 6-16, so in the present instance, St. Paul's words are addressed to both the faithful and the catechists and other neophyte ministers who had been appointed to give instruction. (Cf. à Lapide in utroque loco.)

In a certain sense every Christian is a *minister* or *witness* of the faith that he professes. He has as it were a *mission* and a *responsibility.* His own conduct must be consistent and exemplary, so as to give "no offense (or scandal) to any man."

Our Lord Himself has given this precept to all: "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. v. 16).

He will have no part with those who will do nothing for Him: "He that is not *with* me, is *against* me, and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth" (Luke xi. 23).

Disedifying conduct on the part of those professing to be Christians, moved St. Paul even to tears: "For many walk of whom I have told you often (and now tell you weeping), that they are *enemies of the cross of Christ:* Whose end is destruction" (Phil. iii. 18). "They that are such," he says, speaking of the same class of persons, "serve not Christ Our Lord; but . . . by pleasing speeches and good words seduce the hearts of the innocent" (Rom. xvi. 18).

Even without falling into the more grievous faults referred to by

St. Paul, much scandal and disedification is given by anger, resentment, gossip, and *selfishness*—not to say *dishonesty*—in business relations.

The more *respectable* the person is or claims to be, the greater the scandal given.

II. Obligation of practising *Patience:* 1. In bearing those trials which come by the providence of God, and *not* from the malice of men: Tribulations, sorrows, bereavements, misfortune, failure in business, poverty.

We have no right to murmur against these trials. "If we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil?" (Job ii. 10).

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord" (Ibid. i. 21).

2. In bearing with the faults of others, and the injuries received at their hands: Personal affronts, calumnies, detraction, persecution, deception, injustice, etc.

"Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake: Be glad and rejoice; for your reward is very great in heaven" (Matt. v. 11, 12).

3. In bearing interior trials—coming from our own defects of character; our evil propensities; weakness in presence of temptation and discouragement.

Remember the consoling assurance given to St. Paul: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for power is made perfect in infirmity" (II. Cor. xii. 9).

Conclusion.—Such is the lesson contained in to-day's epistle.

Those who try to put it in practice will undoubtedly spend this

holy season in a manner most pleasing to God, and consequently most profitable to themselves.

For many it will doubtless bring the grace of permanent conversion from their evil ways.

For all it will be the beginning of a better, more consistent, more edifying life—realizing, as they will, more fully their duties and responsibilities; and finding in the very efforts they will make the strength, the consolation, and the grace which will lead them on nearer and nearer to God.

Encouragement not wanting: God is as willing now as ever to help those who will turn to Him. His words as true for us, mean as much for us as for those living in the days of the Prophet by whose mouth they were spoken: "In an acceptable time I have heard thee, and in the day of salvation I have helped thee" (Isa. xlix. 8). For the Apostle tells us that time and that day have not passed: "Behold *now* is the acceptable time; behold now is the day of salvation."

Remember, however, that this may be the *last time* for any one of those present.

Hardly rash to say it surely will be for some their *last Lent.*

No stronger reasons or motives should be needed for heeding the earnest, heartfelt appeal of the Apostle: "Brethren, we do exhort you, that you receive not the grace of God in vain!"

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

Sanctification: Its True Meaning.

"This is the will of God, your sanctification."—I. Thess. iv. 3.

Exordium.—Call attention to the ever-watchful care of our Holy Mother Church in reminding her children of the *Will of God* in their regard, and in exhorting them to do it.

To-day she tells in the words of the Great Apostle, that God *wills* our *Sanctification,* i. e., He *commands* that all who would have any part with Him in eternal life, *must* become *Saints.*

Many, probably the large majority of sincere, well-meaning Christians find it difficult to believe that God really requires so much of them.

The reason is, that they have a false idea of what is meant by *Sanctification.*

I. The causes of the error.

II. What Sanctification means.

III. What is required in order to attain to it.

I. Many of the best and most sincerely pious, God-fearing and God-serving people imagine that *Sanctification* is to be attained by only a very limited few, who have been favored with extraordinary graces, and endowed with heroic powers of will, endurance, self-denial and constancy.

They pay them all honor as God's special friends; invoke their aid and intercession; and try in their sincere and humble way to imitate some of their virtues. But they would consider it *a mortal sin* of *pride* and *presumption* to think of themselves as ever becoming *Saints.*

They hope, indeed, through the mercy of God, to get to heaven. They know that they are *obliged to hope,* and *forbidden to despair.* They confidently hope and believe that very many of their friends and relatives are there, and myriads of others. Yet even in all that heavenly throng, they imagine that the *real Saints* are in a very small minority. The rest are saved indeed, and enjoying eternal happiness beyond all human conception; but still only *ordinary souls —not Saints.*

Hence their dismay when told that God commands *all* to be *Saints.*

Others led into error (and, it must be confessed, not altogether through their own fault) by the overcramming of the *extraordinary* —not to say the *extravagant,* the *singular,* and the *eccentric* into the so-called "lives" of the Saints.

Would probably be seriously disedifying to throw the least discredit upon books that the faithful are reading piously and with a certain amount of spiritual profit.

But the error here referred to might be effectually removed, by explaining that many of those *extraordinary things* related in the *lives* of the Saints, simply show the *extraordinary insight* which God grants to certain souls into *spiritual things*—the enormity of sin, the rigor of its punishment, the greatness of the eternal reward, etc.

But these *special* privileges are not an *essential* condition of *Sanctity.* They were doubtless given to those who received them as much for *our good* as for *theirs.*

Moreover, these *special favors* are seldom unaccompanied by *special trials.*

St. Paul, after being rapt even to the third heaven (II. Cor. xii. 7).

Another stumbling block for many is found in the unreasonable,

injudicious, and inconsistent *attempts* at *extraordinary piety,* made by certain classes of persons, young and middle-aged and older. By temperament, natural inclination, or force of circumstances, they acquire *a manner of acting,* which they keep up persistently on all *proper occasions.* In this they unfortunately get credit for "doing like Saints;" while their many inconsistencies, and general *unamiableness,* cause many to feel that they themselves would rather *not* be "Saints," and almost to think that the world would be none the worse if there were fewer in it. The shallowness of this false idea may be easily shown.

II. The true meaning of *Sanctification.* It is a very old word in the Bible. Goes back to the time when God was dealing directly with His chosen people, the Israelites.

Its meaning then, as now, was a *Separation;* a *setting apart; devotion* or *consecration* to a certain purpose.

It was of first importance that the Israelites should be *separated* from the worship of the false gods, before they could have any part with Jehovah. Equally necessary that they should be *separated* from all iniquity, sinful acts and practices.

Hence God says to the Israelites: "You shall be *holy* (Saints), unto me, because I the Lord am holy, and I have *separated* you from other people, that you should be *mine"* (Lev. xx. 26).

"You shall be *holy,* because I am *Holy"* (Ibid. xi. 44). That is, as God by His very nature is separated from all that is evil, impure, unclean, so must those who would come to Him keep themselves *separated* from all defilement and iniquity.

Sanctification also means *attachment.*

These two meanings *separation* and *attachment,* far from being contradictory, agree perfectly, and are necessary each to the other, to complete the idea of *Sanctification,* or *Sanctity: Separation from*

evil, and *attachment to God.* The latter naturally follows from the former; and this is precisely what makes *a Saint.*

III. Evident that the foregoing is the sense in which St. Paul uses the word *Sanctification.*

His own admirable explanation of what God requires.

Purity of Morals: Avoiding the licentious excesses of pagans and libertines. Preserving the casket of the soul undefiled. Guarding faithfully that *interior moral integrity,* which is incomparably the greatest ornament, as it is the richest, of man or woman, youth or maiden.

Honesty and *fair-dealing* with our fellow men.

Various ways in which this precept may be violated. Evils following from it: Injury to neighbor; debasement of personal character; destruction of mutual confidence, etc.

Admirable picture, on the contrary, of what society would be, if the two precepts just given were put in practice.

Conclusion.—What the Apostle announces to be "the will of God" is not impossible of accomplishment. Is intended for *all,* and not for a few.

Remember that God's *will* here means His *command;* and He could not require less as the price of eternal happiness.

All will not indeed reach the same height of perfection, but *all without exception,* are bound to strive to become "Holy unto God." "For this is the will of God, your Sanctification."

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.

Sins of the Tongue.

"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be so much as named amongst you, as becometh saints; nor obscenity, nor foolish talking, nor scurrility, which is to no purpose."—Eph. v. 3, 4.

Exordium.—The miracle recorded in to-day's Gospel, the cure of the dumb man, suggests a lesson in regard to "Cowardice in Speech," or *silence,* through some unworthy motive, when duty, truth, justice, the honor and glory of God require that we should speak. (Cf. sketch on the Gospel, in First Series.)

In the Epistle, on the other hand, the Apostle gives a salutary warning against the *wrong use* of the gift of speech—the use of *indecent language.*

During this holy season of Lent, the time of amendment and good resolutions, it is most fitting and will prove most profitable to reflect upon the enormous amount of evil committed by *Sins* of *the Tongue.*

I. St. Paul first mentions certain sins that were characteristically *pagan.* Committed by people who *knew not the true God.* Who in their ignorance were given over to degrading, beastly passions. Who knew no law of restraint, and followed without scruple or remorse their animal instincts.

Many of the early converts to Christianity were from among the pagans. The little Christian communities were vastly outnumbered by those who remained pagans, and continued in their evil ways. Hence the Christians necessarily saw and knew of these things; and were exposed to be influenced by them.

The Apostle, therefore, warns them not to allow certain sins to

be so much as mentioned among *them;* for *they* were *Saints,* i. e., *separated from* the immoral heathens, and *devoted to* the love and service of the *true* and *only living God.*

Among these sins he includes *covetousness,* in the sense of unrestrained, morbid desire of sensual gratification; a longing for the opportunity, regardless of the sinfulness of the act. (Cf. St. Jerome, apud à Lapide.)

Evidently to make such things—the actual commission of or the desire to commit sins which "shall not even be so much as named among Christians"—the subject of conversation is a most grievous, even diabolic *misuse* of the gift of speech. It is a constant incentive to the deliberate and frequent, if not habitual, commission of sins most offensive to God, most degrading to man.

The Apostle seems to place in a second category *obscenity, foolish talking* and *scurrility*—not that these may not be very grievous sins, and in many cases surely are; but because the degree of malice, as well as the amount of evil immediately resulting from such conversation, *may be* less than when it is a question of boasting of sins committed, and of encouraging or inducing others to do the same.

It is well to bear in mind that the *habit* of indulging in this second kind of conversation very frequently leads to mortal sin.

Obscenity.—The habit of using (often without reason, reflection, or sense) words and expressions, indecent, vile, filthy, utterly opposed to all purity of mind.

Foolish Talking.—By which the Apostle probably means light, frivolous, thoughtless talk about serious or sacred things; allusions, sometimes thoughtless, sometimes intentional, to things indelicate or indecent. Using double-meaning words, or looking for such meaning where it is not intended.

II. Dwell upon the manifold and incalculable evils resulting from these various faults.

Safe to say that they are, directly or indirectly, the source or cause of by far the greater part of the sins of immorality committed in the world.

1. They are a constant incentive to sin. 2. They diminish the dread and hatred of it. 3. They destroy all relish for religious truths, maxims, and precepts—the food and nourishment of the soul.

Lastly, they generate a *foul* and *filthy imagination,* which defiles every pure and pious thought with its unclean pictures and associations.

III. Many other *sins of the tongue,* besides those mentioned in the epistle: Lying, detraction, calumny, and flattery. An old Greek proverb says "Calumny and Flattery are Sisters." The one is lying behind a person's back; the other lying to his face.

Also spiteful language, opprobrious epithets, gossip, exaggeration of the faults of others, unkind words, hastiness in speech, profanity, etc.

Numberless texts of Scripture pointing out and warning against the evils resulting from *Sins of the Tongue:*

"Many have fallen by the edge of the sword, but not so many as have perished by their own tongue" (Ecclus. xxviii. 22).

"*The tongue* is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. By it we bless God and the Father; and by it we curse men, who are made after the likeness of God" (James iii. 8, 9).

"They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent: the venom of asps is under their lips" (Ps. cxxxix. 4).

"Thou hast loved malice more than goodness; and iniquity rather than to speak righteousness. . . . Therefore will God destroy thee forever" (Ps. li. 5, 7).

"Wo to them that are of a double heart, and to wicked lips" (Ecclus. ii. 14).

"The discourse of sinners is hateful, and their laughter is *at the pleasures of sin*" (Ibid. xxvii. 14).

Add to these the severe denunciation by St. Paul in to-day's Epistle: He assumes that those who speak constantly evil things, do them; and tells them that they are "worshippers of idols" (i. e., of the devil himself, who is the author and instigator of idolatry), that they shall have "no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

Conclusion.—Earnest exhortation to careful self-examination on these various sins of the tongue.

Appeal to grown men and women, youths and girls, to heed the admonition of St. Paul, in regard to impure, indecent language.

Warn all against numerous other faults of the tongue. Correction of them the most profitable and acceptable Lenten task. All need to try it.

"If any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, . . . this man's religion is vain" (James i. 26).

"If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man" (Ibid. iii. 2).

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

The Reading of the Bible.

"Thinkest thou that thou understandest what thou readest?"—Acts viii. 30.

Exordium.—Away back, in the days of the apostles, these words were addressed by Philip, one of the first seven deacons, to a man whom he met on the road reading his Bible. The stranger was "a man of great authority," an officer in the court of a queen. Hence we may suppose he was a man of some learning and intelligence. Yet his answer was: "And how can I, unless some man show me?" And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him" in his chariot.

Philip complied; explained the Scriptures to him so clearly that the stranger believed in Our Lord Jesus Christ, asked for baptism; received it at the hands of Philip, "and went his way rejoicing" (Acts viii. 26-39).

Here was a case in which an intelligent man needed some one to aid him in his *reading of the Bible.*

Again we read that St. Peter warned the Christians of his day against false teachers, ignorant interpreters, and *indiscriminate* reading of the Holy Scriptures.

In the Epistle of "our most dear brother Paul," he says, "are certain things *hard to be understood,* which the unlearned and unstable wrest, *as they do the other Scriptures,* to their own destruction" (II. Peter iii. 15, 16).

The Catholic Church has been accused of keeping the Bible out of the hands of the people. The accusation substantially false. Faithful to her divine mission, she has simply tried to prevent her

children from "wresting the Scriptures to their own destruction." The facts just related furnish sufficient justification. (For an excellent popular exposition of this point see *Question Box*, Conway, C.S.P., pp. 63-74.)

But the Epistle of to-day furnishes a striking proof of the wisdom of the Church in her guardianship of the Sacred Text, and of the necessarily evil results of its indiscriminate reading by "the unlearned and unstable"—even by the learned and intelligent, who have not made a special study of it. How many honest persons would be ashamed to admit that they do not understand what has just been read! Who can say how many have *mis*understood it, in the past?

I. Some have found in it a scriptural warrant for divorce or concubinage, in circumstances similar to those of Abraham—being pleased to consider him a *fairly moral* man.

Others, on the contrary, find in it only cause for scandal or for absolute disbelief in the sacred narrative. Abraham was *not a moral man.* Sarah a very poor type of woman. She first advised Abraham to do that which was evil, and was afterward jealous and cruelly vindictive toward the handmaid and her child, while Abraham weakly consented to turn heartlessly against his own flesh and blood.

The scriptural facts of the case: Ten long generations had passed upon the earth between Noah and Abraham (Gen. xi. 10-26).

Vice and idolatry had again corrupted the human race. [Deane's Abraham; Geikie, Old Testament Characters; or, Hours with the Bible; xiii., xiv.] God calls Abraham from the midst of this iniquity, ordering him to leave his kindred and his father's house, and go into a land which would be shown him, "And I will make of thee a

great nation, and I will bless thee and magnify thy name" (Gen. xii. 2).

Abraham obeys promptly; goes to the distant land of Chanaan. There the Lord appears to him and says: "To *thy seed* will I give this land. And he built there an altar to the Lord" (ibid. v. 7).

Ten years (xvi. 2) passed of faithful service to Jehovah, yet no heir came to Abraham; and Sarah his wife was far advanced in years. Still his faith faltered not in the promises of the Lord, but he began to believe that they would be fulfilled, not in any child of his own, but in that of his servant Eliezer, "the steward of his house."

The Lord tells him this shall not be; that the heir shall be the child of his own flesh and blood, and that his seed shall be as the stars of the heavens. "And Abraham believed God, and it was reputed to him unto justice" (Gen. xv. 1-6).

Yet how was the promise to be fulfilled—Sarah being hopelessly barren? According to the custom of the time, Abraham might, in good conscience, take a secondary wife; and Sarah, equally anxious for the fulfilment of the divine promise, advised him to do so, hoping that, in this way at least, she might be a mother to the children that would be born to him (Gen. xvi. 2).

Her magnanimity ill-repaid by the ungrateful bond-woman (ibid. v. 4).

Thirteen years more roll by, after the birth of Ismael (Cf. xvi. 16, and xvii. 1, 17), and God finally makes His will clearly known to Abraham: Sarah, in spite of her advanced age, shall bear a son, whose name shall be called Isaac; and he, and none other, shall be *heir to the promises* (xvii. 19). Such the story of two virtuous souls, living by *Faith,* in an age of darkness and idolatry. One only desire—*to do the will of God.*

II. St. Paul's application of it: He is arguing with the Galatians to show the superiority of the New Law over the Old. [Cf. Sketch on Epistle of the Sunday within the Octave of Christmas.]

He says God permitted these things to happen thus, as it were in allegory, or as a symbolical representation of the Two Testaments: "The one from Mount Sinai, engendering unto bondage, which is Agar."

From Sinai was given the Old Law (Lev. xxvii. 34), which still held sway in "that Jerusalem which *now is* (in the days of St. Paul), and is still in bondage with her children." Hence the "affinity" between it and Sinai. Even the *distance* between them was all a desert, notorious for the forty years' wanderings, sins, and punishments of their forefathers.

"But that Jerusalem which is above *is free,* which is *our Mother.*" Of this, Sarah, *the free-woman,* was the type.

Isaac was the child of promise; and we Christians are his brethren, and, like him, heirs to the promise.

Ismael "was born *according to the flesh;*" and as "the flesh lusteth against the spirit," (Gal. v. 17,) so Ismael *persecuted* Isaac (Gen. xxi. 9; cf. à Lapide in Gal. iv. 29), and was cast out—by the will of God.

"So, brethren," concludes the apostle, "*we* are not the children *of the bond-woman,* but *of the free*: by that freedom wherewith *Christ* hath made us free."

This simple exposition can not fail to show forcibly the frequent need there is of proper explanation of the Holy Scriptures.

Conclusion.—Exhortation to gratitude to God for having given a Guardian and Infallible Teacher of His divine word, for not leaving us to blind guides or false teachers or to our own vain efforts—like the poor Ethiopian in his chariot. Docility in following the guidance

of our Holy Mother Church. Zeal in trying to learn as much as possible of the true meaning of the Holy Scriptures.

Earnest attention to the explanation of the Epistles and Gospels of the Sundays.

Most useful even to parents and other grown persons, to read the simple Bible Histories taught to the children in the parish schools.

Read the Life of Our Lord, v. g., by Fouard or by Elliott, C.S.P. Lastly, read the Sacred Text itself, *in the versions authorized by the Church.*

But in this reading remember the rule and advice given by the pious author of the Imitation:

"All Holy Scripture ought to be read in that spirit with which it was made. . . . *But* our curiosity often hinders us in reading the Scriptures when we attempt to understand and discuss that which should be simply passed over. If thou wilt receive profit, read with *simplicity* and *Faith;* and seek not at any time the fame of being learned" (bk. i. ch. v.).

Strive to do these things and "you shall know the Truth" (John viii. 32), and shall enjoy *that freedom* "wherewith Christ hath made us free."

PASSION SUNDAY.

The Excellence of the Sacrifice of Calvary.

"For if the blood of goats and of oxen, and the ashes of a heifer being sprinkled, sanctify such as are defiled, *to the cleansing of the flesh,* how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, by the Holy Ghost, offered himself without spot to God, *cleanse our conscience* from dead works to serve the living God!"—Heb. ix. 13, 14.

Exordium.—Appropriateness of the Epistle for the beginning of *Passiontide,* the name given in the Church's Liturgy to the last two weeks of Lent.

During the past four weeks our attention has been kept constantly fixed upon the evil of sin, the necessity of penance, how to perform it.

During the next two we shall be instructed in the Mystery of the Passion—the efficacy and the severity of the atonement made for us by Our Lord.

Nothing so sublime in the whole history of *Religious Thought,* and human seeking after divine truth, as what is offered for our consideration every year at this time by Holy Mother Church. [See *Liturgical Year,* Passiontide and Holy Week. Ch. ii. and iii.]

To-day our attention is called to the incomparable superiority of the Sacrifice offered by Our Lord on Calvary over the "*sin-offerings*" and other *bloody sacrifices* of the Old Law.

I. The Sacrifices of the Old Law: "In the worship of the Old Testament everything was *symbolical;* i. e., *spiritual realities* were conveyed through *outward signs,* and every *physical* defilement pointed to and carried with it, as it were, a *spiritual* counterpart." [Edersheim, *The Temple: its Ministry and Sacrifices,* ch. xviii. 301.]

A casual reading of Leviticus and Numbers is liable to produce the impression that the number of ceremonial prescriptions—*purifications,* etc.—is excessive and bewildering. Reading them with reflection and in a proper spirit of reverence excites sentiments of profound admiration of the wisdom and goodness of God in devising this means of *branding,* as it were, into the very hearts of an ignorant, carnal people, degraded by more than four centuries (Exod. xii. 40) of idolatrous associations and influences, an habitual dread and horror of whatever might make them *unclean* in His sight.

Admirable preparation for the standard of *spiritual cleanness* to be taught and required under the New Law. True, human weakness caused the Jews in general, and the Pharisees in particular, to lose the true significance of these *symbolic rites.* They mistook the *symbol* for the *reality;* the *shadow* for the *substance.*

Our Blessed Lord Himself combated this error during His life on earth. (Cf. Matt. xv. 2; xxiii. 7, 23, 25.)

It was one of the first great obstacles which the apostles had to overcome.

St. Paul's constant preoccupation was to overcome and remove it. Such is the subject of to-day's Epistle.

The sacrifices of the Old Law served, at best, only for "the cleansing of the *flesh.*"

Allusion is made to what was regarded by the Jews as the most solemn of all their "purifications": The sprinkling of the ashes of the red heifer was to remove the greatest of all defilements—that incurred by *contact,* direct or indirect, *with the dead.*

Symbolical meaning beautiful and impressive; a true foreshadowing of one of the great doctrines of Christianity.

Death was considered evidence of *the existence of sin*—in the world, if not in the individual.

"Sin had rendered fellowship with God impossible. Sin was *death* (Rom. vi. 23)* and had *wrought death* (Rom. v. 12),* and the dead body, as well as the *spiritually dead* soul, was the evidence of its sway." (Item Edersheim, 305.)

According to the Law, any one who touched a corpse, or a bone thereof, or the grave, or entered the tent in which a person had died, was *unclean* (Num. xix. 11, 14, 16.) For the cleansing from this defilement, a red cow, or heifer, was to be selected—one "without blemish, and that had not borne the yoke," and taken to the priest, who was to immolate it, without the camp, and, with his finger, sprinkle the blood "over against the tabernacle seven times." Then another of the Levitical order was to burn the victim entirely—skin, flesh, blood, and entrails; while a third Levite was to gather up the ashes and carry them forth without the camp, and deposit them "in a most clean place, that they be reserved. . . . for a *water* of aspersion; because the cow was burnt for sin" (Num. xix. 2-5, 9).

"Every one that toucheth the corpse of a man, and is not sprinkled with this mixture, shall profane the tabernacle of the Lord, and *shall perish out of Israel*" (ibid. v. 13). [For various symbolical meanings of this "sin offering," see à Lapide in Num. xix.]

Much as the Jews were impressed by the prescriptions of the Law, they observed only the *letter*, and lost the spirit.

Hence their total rejection by Almighty God: "I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts: and I will not receive a gift of your hand. From the rising of the sun, even to the going down, my name is great *among the Gentiles;* and in every place *there is sacrifice*, and there is offered to my name *a clean oblation*: for my name is great *among the Gentiles*" (Mal. i. 10, 11).

* The Scriptural references are not found in the passage quoted.

II. This "*Sacrifice and clean oblation*" none other than that offered by our blessed Lord, on Calvary, and on our altars:

"Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not: but a body thou hast fitted to me: Holocausts for sin did not please thee. Then said I: Behold I come to do thy will, O God" (Heb. x. 5, 6, 9).

Our Lord's *humanity* was mysteriously united to his *divinity* for the sole purpose of offering an *acceptable sacrifice* to His eternal Father; an adequate *atonement for sin; a worthy reparation* for the *offense* offered to His divine majesty.

"The blood of goats and of oxen, and the ashes of the heifer," could never do this.

Neither could they cleanse our *souls* from sin.

But "the blood of Christ, who, by the Holy Ghost, offered himself unspotted to God, *can* cleanse our conscience from *dead works* (the works of sin) to serve the living God." The sacrifices and "sin-offerings" of the Old Law had to be offered *repeatedly*, for each individual defilement. But "Christ being come, a High Priest of the good things to come . . . entered *once* into the Holies, having obtained *eternal redemption*—for those who would profit by it. Thus is shown the *excellence*, the *incomparable superiority* of His *sacrifice*.

The preaching of this *great Truth* converted the world in the days of the apostles.

By preaching it to-day, our Holy Mother Church preserves, strengthens, and propagates the Faith preached and handed down by them.

"O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. For his mercy is confirmed upon us: and *the truth of the Lord remaineth forever*" (Ps. cxvi.).

Conclusion.—Exhortation to an ever increasing sense of filial gratitude to our Holy Mother Church, for her watchful care over us,

and her faithful guidance in the things that pertain to God, and to His holy will in our regard.

Through this ever faithful and watchful guidance we are made conscious of the infinite debt of gratitude we owe to Our Lord Jesus Christ, by means of whose death we "are called to receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

PALM SUNDAY.

Christ Our Model.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."—Phil. ii. 5.

Exordium.—Connection between the Epistle and the Gospel of the day: The latter describes our blessed Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The sudden, spontaneous uprising and outpouring of the people, to do Him unprecedented honor: Spreading their garments on the ground before Him, and tearing the branches from the trees, and strewing them in the way, greeting Him with the joyful cry: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

The sacred narrative does not tell us that He responded to this grand ovation by either word or salutation, as is the custom with conquerers and heroes, or others honored by a public, popular demonstration.

One quiet answer only did He return to the Pharisees, who besought Him to rebuke His followers: "I say to you, that if these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out" (Luke xix. 40).

He passed on, in silent majesty, to the Temple, only to behold once more its desecration; and when eventide was come He returned, apparently *alone,* to the solitude and the humble surroundings of Bethania (Mark xi. 11).

Thus did He flee from the honors and praises of the worldly and abstain from all vain display, and even open acknowledgment of His own merits and greatness.

Such the model set before us in the Epistle: "Let this mind be in you, which is also in Christ Jesus."

I. The words of to-day's Epistle were written by St. Paul to a Christian community who were probably the dearest to his heart of all his converts—the Philippians.

Their conversion (through no fault of theirs) had cost him dearly: For the casting out of an evil spirit from a woman, he was haled before the Roman tribunal, and without trial or hearing, was stripped of his garments, brutally scourged, and cast into prison, where, through a miraculous intervention, he converted the jailer, his family, and many of the prisoners; and further obtained an honorable and triumphant release (Acts xvi. 22-40).

Before this scourging and imprisonment he had made other converts, and was free to see them all before leaving Philippi. (Cf. Fouard, St. Paul, vol. i. 112-123; Iverach, St. Paul, ch. vii., Men of the Bible Series.)

Departing from Philippi, he left the Faith behind him, but carried with him the unfailing love of his converts.

Later on, when they heard that he was a prisoner in Rome, they sent him a testimonial of their affection. (Fouard, vol. ii. ch. i. and ii.; Iverach, ut supra.)

In return, he sent them his Epistle, full of the most ardent outpourings of his large, generous and affectionate heart.

Only one, gentle admonition, and a warning against false teachers.

As not unfrequently happened in the early Christian communities, there were at Philippi Jews and Gentiles; and besides this racial distinction, there was also that of *social grade.*

Hence it is not surprising that there were certain manifestations of *pride* and *self-conceit.*

The Great Apostle could not more effectively combat this pernicious evil than by appealing to the example of his *Divine Master,* whom he loved to the utmost limit of human affection and devotion.

II. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

Our divine Saviour was GOD.

It was no "robbery," or false pretense on His part to proclaim His *equality* with His eternal Father.

Yet He was willing to assume our human nature; to appear as *an ordinary man;* to submit to all the trials, calumnies, and persecutions, which, according to the will of His Father, fell to His lot on earth: "Becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Our Lord might easily have avoided passing for the illiterate "Son of a carpenter." Might have made all with whom He came in contact show the respect due to Him upon so many titles.

Might have silenced every evil and calumnious tongue.

Might, without revealing His divinity, have received greater honor and respect than the world had ever shown to any man. And might have left the record of it to honor the Christian name.

He did none of these things. Left His vindication and His glorification in the hands of His eternal Father.

Left to us as the guide and inspiration of our lives, this simple injunction: "Learn of me, because I am meek, and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls" (Matt. xi. 29).

St. Paul enforces the precept, by calling attention to the recompense: *"Wherefore,* God exalted him," etc.

III. Evident, therefore, that St. Paul means to propose Our Lord, *in His humanity,* as *a model,* not only to the Christians of his day, but to those of all time.

Wishes to show that humility—absence of *self-assertion* and *self-glorification*—is pleasing to God, and has its reward: "Not he who commendeth himself is approved, but he whom God commendeth" (II. Cor. x. 18).

Self-abasement extremely repugnant to human nature.

Many who may be justly considered sincere, and, *according to human standards,* practical Christians, are not always ready to "abase *themselves,* taking the form of a servant."

On the contrary, are rather solicitous for all the honor which they imagine to be their due.

They forget the words of our blessed Lord: "The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord" (Matt. x. 24).

"When you have done all these things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants: we have done (*only*) that which we ought to do" (Luke xvii. 10).

There are occasions when a Christian should justify himself. St. Paul did it vigorously. (I. Cor. iv. See also *Sketch* for Sexagesima.)

But the *motive* should be *the cause of Truth,* and *the honor of God;* not mere personal vindication.

Good, *respectable* Christians also exposed to commit the fault of the Pharisees: to "love salutations in the market-place, and the first chairs in the synagogue, and the chief rooms at feasts" (Luke xx. 46).

Careful, honest examination of conscience will frequently reveal other faults of a similar nature and more or less fatally opposed to both the teaching and the example of our divine Saviour.

Conclusion.—Exhortation to take seriously to heart this important and salutary lesson. To ponder it well during this Holy Week, in connection with its sublime and tragic mysteries.

What that lesson teaches, Our Lord requires of us all. First, He tells us that "*His* yoke is sweet, and *His* burden light" (Matt. xi. 30).

Next, He says: "If *any man* will come after me, let him deny himself daily, take up his cross, and *follow me*" (ibid. xvi. 24).

And again, "Whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (ibid. xxiii. 12).

Hardened, indeed, or stupid must be the heart and the mind that will not try to learn and practise this lesson.

Surely all those who are "of good will," will try to do so.

"Let therefore this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

EASTER SUNDAY.

Spiritual Resurrection to a Better and Higher Life.

"Therefore let us feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."—I. Cor. v. 8.

Exordium.—On a certain occasion St. Paul felt it to be his duty to write to the Christians of Corinth commanding them to expel from their midst, and to hold no fellowship with, one who, by his scandalous immorality, had passed the limits of even *heathen decency* (cf. I. Cor. v. 1).

He explained to them the reason of his severity, by a very simple and familiar comparison: As a little *bad* leaven spoils the whole mass of dough, so evil example, *unrebuked*, will corrupt a whole community, and such in fact was already the case, to a great extent, at Corinth. (Cf. Fouard, St. Paul, vol. i. 260.)

To remedy the evil, "purge out the old leaven," he tells them, and "feast with the *un*leavened (pure and uncontaminated) bread of sincerity and truth."

This simple comparison is equally applicable to the ordinary faults to which all are liable, and which constitute the great obstacle to progress in the *Spiritual Life*. Hence the reason why these words of the Great Apostle have been chosen by our Holy Mother Church, for "this day which the Lord hath made," to teach us a lesson appropriate to the occasion:

"Christ our pasch is sacrificed." He has conquered sin; risen triumphant over death, and will soon return to the right hand of His Father—there *to prepare a place for us* (John xiv. 2).

It is meet and just, therefore, that all those who profess to be *Christians, followers of Christ,* should not only rise from the death of sin, but also strive to lead henceforth a *Better and Higher Life.* How is this to be done?

I. "Purge out the old leaven." The following of the Lenten exercises and instructions and meditation on the Passion of our blessed Redeemer have thrown much heavenly light into each faithful soul.

Successful efforts have been made to reenter into friendship with God or to draw nearer to Him. But even though past sins may have been forgiven, *evil propensities still remain,* and will strive to regain the mastery.

There is no sin, however great, that has ever been committed, to which fallen nature, in general, is not more or less inclined.

The germs are there of passions that may, fortunately, have never yet been aroused.

Difference of circumstances and associations, etc., counts for a great deal in difference of moral conduct in individuals.

No one has a right to say that he would have acted better than his unfortunate neighbor had he been placed in the same circumstances, subjected to the same trials, or temptations.

Danger greater still in case of sins already committed, especially where the *fault* has become *a habit.*

The forgiveness of sin, after a sudden and perhaps transient repentance, is but the removal of a cancerous growth, which is liable to return at any time.

Only one sure cure: "Purge out the old leaven." Vigilance, self-examination, constant war against what *we* know and God knows, to be our evil inclinations. St. Paul, in writing to the Christians of Ephesus, says explicitly: "Put off, *according to former conversa-*

tion, the *old man,* who is corrupted according to the desire of error. And be renewed *in the spirit of your mind.* And put on the *new man,* who, according to God, is created *in justice* and *holiness* of *truth.* Let no evil speech proceed from your mouth. Let all bitterness and anger and indignation and blasphemy be put away from you, *with all malice.* And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. iv. 22-31).

II. Detecting and restraining *interior* propensities will naturally lead to a *Better* life in all exterior actions and relations: "*Feasting* on the unleavened bread of *sincerity and truth.*"

But to live the *Higher* life requires something more than sincerity and even-handed justice to our fellow-men.

Comparatively easy to do this: The present reward of notoriety, honor, the praise, gratitude, respect of the world, is an efficacious stimulus.

God is liable to be, and too often is, forgotten, when the world smiles approvingly.

What leads on to the *Higher Life* is the love "of the things that are above"—*the things of God.*

This, too, St. Paul has told us: "If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are *above,* where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are *above,* not the things that are upon the earth. Mortify your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, and covetousness. . . . For which things the wrath of God cometh upon *the children of unbelief*" (Col. iii. 1-6).

Conclusion.—In order therefore to rise to this Better and Higher Life, as every Christian should strive to, it is necessary:

I. To avoid relapsing into sin, by avoiding the occasions of it, and by remembering the sufferings of Our Lord, by which He ob-

tained for each one of us, not only the forgiveness of our sins, but also the previously necessary grace of sorrow and repentance. Feast not again " with the leaven of malice and wickedness."

II. To make honest and vigilant effort to discover each evil inclination, and repress, or, if possible, root it out. " Purge out the old leaven."

III. To be thoroughly sincere, honest, and upright in all social relations, actions, and dealings with our fellow men. " Feasting with the *unleavened* bread of *sincerity* and truth."

Lastly, to lead a life of *practical Faith.* Remembering that whatever may be the pleasures, honors, attractions of this world, " we have not here a lasting city, but seek one that is to come " (Heb. xiii. 14).

Cultivating a sincere desire and preference for those imperishable and indescribable blessings which " God hath prepared for them that love him " (I. Cor. ii. 9).

" If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are *above,* where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth."

LOW SUNDAY.

The Peace of God.*

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you."—John xiv. 27.

Exordium.—The announcement of the birth of our divine Saviour was accompanied by a heaven-sent message of *Peace* (Luke ii. 14).

By the dispensation of divine Providence, the benighted world was enjoying unwonted Peace at the time. [Cf. Didon, Life of Christ, Vol. i., 2, 3. For a description unsurpassed in beauty, and easily available for quotation, Milton's *Ode on the Nativity.*]

Our Lord's legacy to His disciples, on the eve of His Passion, was *Peace* (text above). His first salutation after His resurrection, was *Peace;* as seen in to-day's Gospel.

These facts (not to quote numerous texts of Scripture) seem abundantly sufficient to show that God desires to give His *Peace to* men *of good will.*

What, then, is this Peace of God?

I. *Peace,* in its first, and highest sense, is defined: "A state of freedom from agitation, commotion, or disturbance."

Such was the meaning of Our Lord in His words at the last supper, and in His salutation after His resurrection. (Cf. à Lapide, John xiv. 27, 28; Luke xxiv. 36, 37.)

He wished to free His disciples from the fear, anxiety and perplexity under which they were laboring.

They could see nothing before them but opposition, persecution, probable failure and ignominy.

* For sketch on epistle of the day, see first series of Sketches.

The impression made by reading the Gospels is, that those good and sincere men, who afterward "planted the Church in their own blood," were, as Our Lord Himself told them, "Foolish and slow of heart to believe" (Luke xxiv. 25).

They had seen Him heal the sick, cure the lepers, raise the dead to life, still the tempest, multiply the loaves and fishes, walk upon the waters. Three of them had witnessed His transfiguration. In spite of all this they did not understand; frequently asked foolish questions. All fled from Him in the garden, and Peter denied Him, soon after His arrest.

Such is still the story of many honest, well-meaning souls. Tossed about, cast down by trials, doubts, perplexities, contradictions, temptations.

Like the apostles, they forget the wonders Our Lord has wrought, not only in proof of His divinity, but also in proof of His love for us. Like them, they are fully conscious of *present* troubles; and dread those which they believe the future has in store for them. No human power or ingenuity can brighten up the gloomy prospect ahead, or bring relief for present ills.

One sovereign remedy: "The *Peace of God,* which surpasseth all understanding" (Phil. iv. 7).

It alone can produce in the mind and soul that "state of freedom from agitation, fear, commotion, or disturbance."

It brings a sense of security, based upon the friendship of God: "If God be for us, who is against us?" (Rom. viii. 31).

II. The Peace of God is granted *only* "to men of good will."

To those who strive to do the will of God—to keep His commandments: "Much peace have they that love thy law" (Ps. cxviii. 165). "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (Is. liv. 13).

This Divine Peace can not reign in the soul that is not in friendship with God—that is addicted to sin.

"There is no peace for the wicked, saith the Lord God" (Is. lvii. 21).

"They have not known the way of peace, and there is no judgment in their steps: their paths are become crooked to them; every one that treadeth in them, knoweth no peace" (ibid. lix. 8).

III. The Peace of God and the Peace of the World are irreconcilable: What the world calls *Peace* does not bring calm, tranquillity; freedom from agitation or disturbance.

It is a hollow, insincere conventionality.

Calm and tranquillity of mind are acquired by stifling conscience. *Social Peace,* or harmony, obtained by unblushing sacrifice of principle—trying to forget or ignore flagrant violations of justice and morality: Pilate and Herod were *friends* (at peace with each other) after each in his turn had despised and ill-treated our divine Saviour (Luke xxiii. 12).

Our Lord, though *Prince* of *Peace* (Is. ix. 6), would have no peace with the *world,* i. e. with the *wicked* and godless of the world: "Think ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you no; but *separation.*" No contradiction between these words and others, uttered by Him; nor with those of the angelic choir.

Our Lord meant that there should be no peace or compromise and harmony between His followers and His enemies; between His maxims and the maxims of the world. [Cf. à Lapide in Matt. x. 34.]

"Hence he says, Not as the world giveth do I give unto you."

Conclusion.—Exhortation to adore our Risen Lord as truly the PRINCE OF PEACE. To rejoice in the salutation addressed by Him to His disciples, and through them, to us all: *Peace be to you.*

To strive to appreciate this inestimable blessing, to take the means of possessing it always.

To beware of rejecting and losing it, as did the Jews of old: "When he drew near, seeing the city, he wept, saying: If thou also hadst known, and that, in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes" (Luke xix. 41, 42).

No better way of fully realizing and participating in the joys of Easter than acquiring this Peace of God.

"Therefore let us follow after the things that are of peace" (Rom. xiv. 19). "And *may* the Peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 7).

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

The Following of Christ the Christian's Duty.

"Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example, that you should follow his steps."—I. Pet. ii. 21.

Exordium.—Special respect and reverence due to the words of to-day's Epistle. They come from Our Lord's first vicar on earth. They are a part of an *Encyclical,* or *Papal Letter* sent around to the first generation of Christians, instructing them in the New Doctrine which our blessed Lord Himself had not only *preached* but *practised.*

Patience in sufferings and trials of every kind; even persecution unto death, forgiveness of injuries, etc.

Christ had given this example. Those who believe in Him "should follow His steps."

Such the doctrine handed down by St. Peter.

Faithfully preserved and faithfully taught by our Holy Mother Church ever since. She reminds us of it again to-day.

I. *Christ suffered for us.* Why?

Because suffering was one of the *consequences;* a part of the *penalty* of *sin.*

But mankind might have gone on suffering to the end of time—even through all eternity—without being able to satisfy the claims of God's justice, or to make adequate reparation to His offended majesty.

Man had done an evil which *he could not repair.*

Yet God demanded *full reparation;* and He would not have been God—*Infinite, All Powerful*—had He failed to obtain it.

He Himself devised the means: *The Incarnation.* All the sacri-

fices of the Old Law, however purely and piously offered, were inadequate (Heb. x. 1).

"Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not: but a body thou hast fitted to me. Holocausts for sin did not please Thee. Then said I: Behold I come: in the head of the book it is written of me: that I should do thy will, O God" (ibid. v. 5-7).

Christ came, therefore, *to suffer,* to offer a *pleasing sacrifice,* to make *adequate reparation* for *sin.*

He "did no sin; neither was there guile found in his mouth."

Nevertheless, "It behooved him, in all things, to be made like unto his brethren. . . . that he might be *a propitiation* for the sins of the people" (Heb. ii. 17).

He, therefore, "bore our sins in his body upon the tree." And "by his stripes we were healed."

II. "*Leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.*"

Example of patience in all manner of trials:

"When reviled, he did not revile."

"When he suffered (ill treatment), he threatened not."

Allowed Himself to be falsely accused and dragged before an unjust judge, and received without a murmur the iniquitous sentence.

"Having joy set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. xii. 2).

Bore His cross not only *from the Pretorium* (Fouard ii. 316), but *from Bethlehem to Calvary.*

From His birth to His death he bore all the trials to which flesh is heir. "Tempted (i. e., *tried*) in all things, like as we are, *but* without sin" (Heb. iv. 15).

This example *must* be followed. Not a matter of *choice, senti-*

ment, or *devotion;* it is the *condition* of our *coming after* Him. He Himself has told us:

"I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so do you also" (John xiii. 15).

"If *any man* will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross *daily,* and follow me" (Luke ix. 23).

"To many," says the author of the Imitation, "this seems a hard saying; but it will be much harder to hear that last word, '*Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*' . . . Go where thou wilt, seek what thou wilt, and thou shalt not find a higher way above, nor a safer way below, than the way of the holy cross" (Bk. ii. c. 12). Our Lord has purchased our *redemption,* left us an *inheritance* which is ours, *provided* we enter upon it by "following His steps."

He purchased it by *doing the will of His Father.*

He tells us that only those who do it in like manner shall "enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. vii. 21).

III. How, then, are we to "follow the steps of Christ"?

By accepting the chalice of suffering, as He did.

The suffering of poverty, if it falls to our lot.

None can be poorer than He was: "The foxes have their holes, and the birds of the air nests; but *the Son of man* hath not where to lay his head" (Luke ix. 58).

The suffering of sickness, physical pain, sorrow. None can equal His, "From the sole of *his* foot to the top of *his* head, there is no soundness in him" (Isa. i. 6).

"O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow" (Lam. Jer. i. 12). [Both texts applied to Our Lord, in Offic. Quinq. Vul.]

Sufferings from "false brethren," by insults, calumny, injustice; even personal violence.

There are indeed occasions on which it is *lawful,* sometimes even a duty, to protect one's good name; to prevent injustice; to defend one's self against violence; but never in a spirit of *revenge* or *retaliation.*

Our Lord has condemned the private application of what was written in the Old Law (Exod. xxi. 24). "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth" (Matt. v. 38).

When these things occur, and there is no lawful redress, then we must follow the example of Our Lord:

"When he was reviled, he did not revile; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly."

He suffered these things, "Who did no sin."

We *need* to suffer them, who have sinned so often, in so many ways, and so grievously.

Conclusion.—Exhortation: To realize the importance of this lesson and the daily need of putting it in practice.

Were suffering not a proper atonement for sin, surely Our Lord would never have suffered as He did. Would never have commanded us to follow His example.

Fidelity in obeying this divine precept will bring grace and peace to our souls, give glory to God, and will refute one of the oft-repeated calumnies against our Holy Mother Church, viz.: that with her system of sacraments, and indulgences, she encourages the commission of sin.

We know that she has ever, unceasingly, taught what she teaches us to-day, "There is no higher way above, nor safer way below, than the way of the holy cross."

She constantly reminds us that "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that *we* should follow his steps."

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

The Christian a Stranger and a Pilgrim in This World.

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires."—I. Peter ii. 11.

Exordium.—Holy Mother Church constantly admonishes us to practise *detachment* from the world; i. e., not to set our hearts on its fleeting vanities, not to adopt and follow its false maxims. Not to act as though we were to live here *always,* or as though there were *no life beyond.* Not to consider ourselves as children of the world, nor the world as our friend. In this she follows faithfully the teaching of Our Lord and His apostles.

He says to us: "If you had been *of the world,* the world would love its own; but because you are *not of the world,* . . . therefore the world hateth you" (John xv. 19).

St. Paul tells us, "We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come" (Heb. xiii. 14).

St. John, *the Beloved Disciple,* says, "We know that *we are of God,* and that the whole world is seated in wickedness" (I. John v. 19).

To-day the prince of the apostles addresses us as "*strangers* and *pilgrims.*"

I. Define and describe the "stranger" and the "pilgrim" in the ordinary sense of the terms. II. Show that the Christian is a stranger and a pilgrim in this world. III. Explain the exhortation of St. Peter in the Epistle.

I. A *stranger* is one stopping or living in a land *not his own.* He comes from another, to which he has not renounced his allegiance.

Has no intention of doing so. His thoughts and affections are there, and thither he hopes one day to return.

Meanwhile he so lives and labors that when the time comes he may return to his native land with honor and riches, to make his *permanent home* there.

A *pilgrim* is a *traveler,* with some fixed object in view. He, too, has the intention of returning to his *home,* his *native land.*

Views the various scenes along his route, studies them, reflects upon all that he sees, tries to make a reasonable estimate of it all, but he *passes on;* does not stop, does not forget his *own home,* is unwilling to exchange it for anything that he sees on the way. His pilgrim's garb, his evident lack of appreciation of what the natives prize so highly, his manners so different from theirs, mark him as a *stranger* and a *foreigner,* and may at time expose him to jeers and ridicule as he passes on. But the thought of *country, home,* and *friends* enables him to look down with pity rather than in anger upon the ignorant, thoughtless jesters. [For fuller development and numerous quotations, cf. à Lapide, *in loco.*]

II. The Christian is a *stranger* and a *pilgrim* in this world.

Every Christian believes in a future life—everlasting. Believes that he is created and destined for that life. Knows the shortness and uncertainty of the present life. Knows that it is beset with trials, disappointments, misfortune, sorrow.

"My days have passed more quickly than the web is cut by the weaver" (Job vii. 6).

"Man born of woman, living but a short time, is filled with many miseries. *He* cometh forth like a flower, and fleeth as a shadow" (ibid. xiv. 1).

"Nor shall he return any more to his (earthly) house; neither shall his place know him any more" (Job vii. 10).

The world moves on. The footprints of the passing stranger are soon effaced by the surging throng that follows. All trace of him and of his passing is quickly blotted from the memory of his fellow-men.

God alone remembers him: "*His* days are short, and the number of his months is with Thee" (Job xiv. 5).

All, Jew as well as Christian, who have had faith in God, have fully realized their condition of *strangers* and *pilgrims*: "We are sojourners before thee; and *strangers,* as were our fathers" (I. Par. xxix. 15).

St. Paul's beautiful enumeration of those who lived and died by faith, before the coming of Our Lord, from Abel to the last of the prophets and holy men of Israel. They beheld the promises "afar off, saluting them, and confessing themselves to be *pilgrims* and *strangers* on the earth" (Heb. xi. 13).

Such have also been the sentiments of saints and martyrs, of all faithful Christians since the coming of Our Lord and the spread of His Gospel.

III. The Christian should therefore feel toward the "*world*" [By which is meant that very large portion of mankind who are carnal, pleasure-seeking, godless—living only for the present life; neither thinking of nor caring for the life to come,] as the stranger and the pilgrim feel toward a land *not their own.* Detached from it. Unidentified with it.

The detachment required of the Christian is a *moral one.*

The followers of Christ are "*in* the world," but "not *of* the world," says Our Lord Himself (John xvii. 11, 14). "We have not received *the spirit* of this world, but *the Spirit of God,*" says St. Paul" (I. Cor. ii. 12).

Detachment from the *spirit* of the world is therefore the duty of

the Christian. "For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life" (I. John ii. 16).

This is precisely what St. Peter *beseeches us,* "as strangers and pilgrims," to avoid. "Refrain yourselves from carnal desires, which war against the soul, having your conversation good among the Gentiles."

By *carnal desires* are meant not only sins against the *Sixth Commandment,* but also sins of anger, envy, hatred, pride, covetousness. In fact, *all sins* are *sins of the flesh;* "carnal desires," the triumph of the *flesh* over the *spirit.* (Cf. à Lapide, *in loco;* also Gal. v. 19-22.)

Remark that the apostle does not counsel us to *war* with the world, to antagonize and exasperate it by inopportune and intemperate denunciations.

Our Lord has warned us against this: He that would root up all the cockle would also destroy the wheat (Matt. xiii. 29). "*Refrain ourselves.*" Regulate our own conduct.

Let our conversation be good among the Gentiles.

If they speak against us as evil doers, let our good works be our vindication.

"Be subject to every human creature for God's sake;" i. e., "Render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matt. xxii. 21).

"For so is the will of God, that by doing well you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."

Conclusion.—This precept of detachment from the world is therefore most reasonable. Not above our power of accomplishment. To ignore it, to cast our lot with the world, to become its votaries, is the blindest folly. "For the fashion of this world passeth away"

(I. Cor. vii. 31). Daily experience shows that we have no hold upon the world. Even were the world true and loyal, we can not remain with it: "Man is like to vanity: his days pass away like a shadow" (Ps. cxliii. 4).

Exhortation: To heed the words of St. Peter and remember that we are but strangers and pilgrims. Those of St. Paul, "We have not here a lasting city." Finally the exhortation of St. John: "Love not the world, nor the things of the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him" (I. John ii. 15)

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

The Gift of Hearing and Speech.

"Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights."—James i. 17.

Exordium.—These words appear and are understood by commentators (cf. à Lapide, *in loco*) to have been written by St. James in refutation of an error then being spread among the Christians; viz., that God is the author of both *good* and *evil.*

St. James, of course, maintained that God is the author of all good gifts, and *only of good;* that whatever *moral* evil befalls man in this world is the result of his own concupiscence: That "*God* tempteth no man" (James i. 13, 14).

Among the *good gifts* which "the Father of lights" has bestowed upon man, may surely be reckoned *Hearing* and *Speech.*

I. The excellence of these gifts. II. How to use them properly. III. Gratitude to God for them.

I. The excellence of these gifts:

Intellect is one of the greatest gifts conferred by God on man. It has been said to comprise "All those powers by which we acquire, retain, and extend *our knowledge.*" But this faculty has to be *developed* with age, by education, and contact with our fellow-men. *Hearing* is the most efficient means of acquiring this *development,* of receiving *instruction,* and acquiring *wisdom.*

Speech is the most efficient means of *manifesting* the development of man's intellectual powers, and of utilizing and communicating to others his mental treasures of knowledge and wisdom.

Striking contrast between those possessing these two gifts and

the unfortunate *deaf mutes.* However intelligent the latter may be, their condition is always pitiable. Their affliction never failed to touch the compassionate heart of our divine Saviour.

II. We are told in to-day's Epistle how we should use these priceless gifts: "Be *swift* to hear and *slow* to speak."

It has been beautifully said, that "God has given man *open ears,* that he might hear many things; but a tongue *inclosed within two barriers,* the teeth and the lips, that he might be slow to speak" (cf. à Lapide, *in loco*). *Hearing* brings us to the knowledge of God and to Faith in Him. *Speech* enables us to confess Him for our own salvation.

"Faith cometh by hearing" (Rom. x. 17), and entereth into the heart; and "with the heart we *believe* unto justice, but *with the mouth* confession is made unto salvation" (Ibid. v. 10). The gift of *hearing* should therefore be used with alertness, docility, and eagerness; to learn "Whatsoever things *that* are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever holy, whatsoever of good fame" (Phil. iv. 8).

This development of the intellect, *by hearing,* to be begun in the arms and at the knees of the loving, virtuous, *Christian Mother.* Fostered by the precept and example of the truly *Christian Father.*

Further developed by thorough *Catholic education.* Finally continued, increased, and carried as far as possible toward perfection, by a sincere, honest, upright *Christian life.*

The infallible result of such development would be the imbibing and *absorption* of true *Christian principles,* to the exclusion of random revelling in fathomless theories, philosophical, social, and quasi-religious.

Much of the fruitless and even injurious speculation of the day is the result of *overmuch hearing,* unguided by proper *Christian education.*

"*Slow to speak,*" the second admonition of the apostle. Again it has been said that "God has given to man *two* ears and *one* tongue, to intimate that he should hear at least twice as much as he should speak" (à Lapide; et S. Basilius, De Vera Virginit.).

The speech of a sensible, intelligent person should be the expression of *truth,* and, to a certain degree, of *wisdom*: "Hide not thy wisdom in her beauty. For by the tongue wisdom is discerned; and understanding and knowledge, by the word of the wise" (Ecclus. iv. 28, 29).

These words are understood by commentators to mean that "a sensible person, speaking *with reflection,* shows forth in his words, knowledge, learning, and prudence" (Sic à Lapide, *in loco*).

But neither truth nor wisdom, learning nor prudence, is to be expected in hasty or inconsiderate speech.

"In the multitude of words there shall not want sin: but he that refraineth his tongue is wise" (Prov. x. 19).

"To speak a word in due time *is like* apples of gold on beds of silver" (ibid. xxv. 11).

Noble use of speech, in instructing the young and the ignorant. In proclaiming the truth. In defending the weak and oppressed. In upholding the cause of right and justice. The great things achieved by eloquence.

How the praises of God have been sounded throughout the ages by the tongues of the righteous, whether learned or unlettered; by those of brilliant intellect or of ordinary talents. Every tongue of every rational creature is able to praise the Giver of "every best gift and every perfect gift."

III. Gratitude to God for these two inestimable gifts.

Sense of gratitude should be awakened by the thought of what we would be without them. By the thought of all the benefits we

have received through *hearing;* and of all the good we have been able to do by *speech.*

Exhortation: To make a good use, and a prudent use of them, according to the Holy Will of God.

To avoid as far as possible the many sins that may be committed by hearing and speaking—thus turning God's precious gifts against Him, or using them only to offend Him.

Pray for a pure, honest, truth-loving heart; docility and reverence in listening to *whatsoever is good and profitable;* and, lastly, for prudence and charity in speech.

"Be swift to hear and slow to speak."

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Religion That Is Not Vain.

"Religion, clean and undefiled before God and the Father, is this: to visit the fatherless and the widows in their tribulations; and to keep one's self unspotted from this world."—James i. 27.

Exordium.—Special circumstances in which these words were written.

St. James was the first Bishop of Jerusalem.

The population of the city was composed of Jews and pagans, and newly converted Christians, exposed to the evil influence of both.

The Jews, in their religious observances, attached undue importance to *external cleanliness.*

On a certain occasion they asked Our Lord, "Why do thy disciples transgress *the tradition of the ancients?* For they wash not their hands when they eat bread."

His withering reply was, "Why do *you* transgress *the commandment of God* for the sake of *your tradition?*" (Matt. xv. 2, 3).

Later on He rebuked them even more severely: "Wo to you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites: because you make clean the *outside* of the cup and the dish, but *within,* you are full of rapine and uncleanness. . . . You are like whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all filthiness. So you also outwardly indeed appear to men *just,* but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matt. xxiii. 25-28).

The pagans were even worse. With their multitude of gods and goddesses, they deified their basest passions, and were delivered up "to a reprobate sense" (Rom. i. 23-32).

These facts alone would have been sufficient to call forth the words of St. James; but writing, as he did, under *Divine Inspiration,* they doubtless had reference to the evils of all ages, even to the end of time.

They certainly have their application in our own day.

I. Define and explain what *Religion* means. II. *Vain Religion.* III. True, or *Genuine* Religion.

I. The word *Religion* is derived from a Latin word that means to *bind,* or *rebind;* to *connect,* or *reattach.*

It means the *bond* which *connects* or *reattaches* man to God. Man born into the world is indeed God's creature. But by reason of *original sin,* and its consequences, he is separated from his Creator, and unless he be *reconnected* with Him, he must perish. He is *adrift* in the vast expanse of creation.

In this helpless condition, he may be compared to a balloon beyond control, driven away into space, or to inevitable destruction.

Or to a man overboard, whose only chance of safety is to catch the rope that is thrown to him—and hold on to it.

Religion is a *moral bond* of union between man and God. It is, as it were, a *rope* or *cable* of *two strands:* One *the grace of God,* mercifully offered; the other, *man's free will,* voluntarily accepting and coöperating, not merely by *passive faith,* but by *active works.*

Religion, therefore, on the part of man, is a *virtue.* As such, it is defined by St. Augustin. "A virtue by which we worship God as our Creator, Lord and Father; and render to Him not only *interiorly,* but also *exteriorly,* the honor which is due to Him" (Lib. x. De Civit. Cap. I.).

That is, not only honor Him in the mind and heart by faith and love, but publicly, before men, by good works: "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John xiv. 15).

"If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. xix. 17).

II. Any profession or pretence of religion, therefore, without keeping the commandments of God, is *vain.*

"Be ye *doers* of the word, and *not hearers only*—deceiving yourselves."

Useless to listen and to hear, unless the result be some practical change for the better, on the part of the hearer.

Sometimes easy and interesting to listen, when conscience acknowledges the truth of what is said, and tells us, as Nathan told David, "Thou art the man" (II. Kings xii. 7).

Unfortunately "the good seed" sometimes falls among thorns; and "they who have heard, going their way, are choked with the cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit" (Luke viii. 14).

Conscience holds up the mirror; the "hearer of the word" sees his own likeness in it; recognizes it; but "goes his way, and presently forgets what manner of man he is."

Our Lord has given one reason for this forgetfulness. St. James adds another, which is perhaps more frequent and less pardonable: "Not bridling the tongue."

May not be question of *obscenity* or *scurrility.*

There are many other forms or habits of speech that render a man's religion *vain:* Discussion of selfish business schemes; of means of defrauding or circumventing one's neighbor; language bitter, unkind, or injurious to him; gossip, scandal, political trickery, subversive of public morals.

In a word, conversation seven days out of seven, in which the thought of God, religion, moral obligations, supernatural motives, never enters.

Where such a spirit prevails in habitual conversation, other evils are sure to follow. Flippancy in regard to things serious and sacred; shallow criticism; overconfident expression of opinion—frequently erroneous, of course.

Persons addicted to these faults may be seen regularly at church on Sundays; but from their conversation during the week, it would be difficult to know, and one would hardly suspect, that they have any *religious belief* at all.

Grave reason to fear that "*their* religion is *vain.*"

III. "Religion, clean and undefiled before God and the Father."

To visit the *fatherless* and the *widows* in their tribulation.

This is practical charity. True philanthropy.

Appalling to think of the number of cases daily occurring of happy, *prosperous,* or at least *hopeful* homes broken up *by death.*

What happens to one home, might just as well have happened to any other.

No greater work possible for the prevention of vice, and the uplifting of the human race, than to aid in the preservation of the *home* of the unfortunate—in the keeping of children together under *their natural influences.*

Asylums necessary; their support a noble, Christian work. But where *the home* can be preserved, and the children properly reared, the results are surer and incomparably better.

Far more could be done in this respect.

The rich might *widen the gates of heaven for themselves by this kind of charity.*

But it is not the work of the rich alone.

No one so poor that he can not give a "mite," or lend a helping hand to the widowed mother and her little fatherless ones.

Probably no virtue of the father more likely to be inherited by

his children. No inherited trait accompanied by more manliness, amiableness and nobility of character. No form of charity and benevolence receives a richer reward. The father who is generous to the widow and the orphan may confidently hope that, should he be taken away from his own, God will see that they receive the reward.

"According to thy ability be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly: if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little. For thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity" (Tob. iv. 8, 10).

"Give, and it shall be given to you: good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over, shall they give into your bosom" (Luke vi. 38).

A word about what non-Catholic brotherhoods and mutual benefit organizations do for the widow and the orphan, might not be out of place.

"And keep one's self unspotted from this world."

An indispensable element of "Religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father."

Fatal illusion, to believe that any amount of charity and benevolence gives a license for a sinful life. Unfortunately, many live as though under this illusion. Certainly such charity *merits*, or at least *attracts* the *grace of God*. But grace must always be corresponded to. God's commandments *must be kept*.

"God is not a respecter of persons" (Acts x. 34), nor acceptor of *bribes*. Exemptions can not be bought at any price. Man must be "a *doer* of the word, and *not a hearer* only." Cause of grief and scandal to see those who are truly generous losing their merit, and risking the loss of their souls, by yielding to the seductions and contamination of the world.

Conclusion.—Exhortation to learn well this beautiful and all-important lesson; and to strive earnestly to put it into practice.

Acquire the true idea of religion. Avoid those faults which render it *vain.* "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only." "Bridle the tongue." Be charitable to the widow and the orphan. Keep aloof from the contaminations of the world.

For in this consists *true religion, "clean and undefiled before God and the Father."*

SUNDAY IN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

Christian Socialism.

"Before all things have a constant mutual charity among yourselves."—I. Peter iv. 8.

Exordium.—This is an age of *unrest.* It is sometimes called an age of *progress.* It is certainly an age of *agitation, struggle;* of systematic organization; of yearning, aspiration, contention, on the part of the masses, to attain to *something better*—something which they believe would be *more just* and *equitable.*

Whether the result of the struggle will be *progress* or not depends, in great part, if not entirely, upon the *correctness* of the *principles* involved and applied.

Many champions of the cause are in the field—not as individuals, but rather as *societies* or *organizations.* Some acting in concert; others, each, on independent lines.

Not a few of these are ardent advocates of a "system" known as *Socialism,* the avowed object of which is "the reconstruction of society."

They propose, *in theory at least,* to substitute *cooperation* for *competition; brotherhood* and *equality* for *selfish rivalry,* and invidious *distinction* of *classes.*

How many of those who are struggling to accomplish this great *amelioration* base their theories upon the *principles* and *the teachings of the Gospel* it is difficult to say.

The more radical and aggressive certainly *do not.*

On the contrary, *irreligious* and often *uneducated* leaders venture to formulate and apply *principles of their own invention.*

Our Lord has said a word about "blind leaders of the blind" (Matt. xv. 14).

It may be said, without fear of contradiction, that *in the word of God* are to be found the *true principles* by which *all social problems* may be solved.

Thus, to begin with, the *precept of charity* is the real fundamental principle of all *legitimate Socialism.* "Thou shalt *love* thy neighbor as thyself," and this *love* must be *mutual,* as we are told in the epistle to-day.

I. In what *mutual charity* consists.

II. Motives that should prompt it.

III. Nothing can contribute more to the uplifting of man.

I. *Love of neighbor,* as prescribed in the Old Law (Lev. xix. 18), and reaffirmed by our divine Saviour in the New (Matt. xxii. 39), consists in wishing to each and every one of our fellow beings the same success in his undertakings, and in the attainment of his legitimate desires; the same exemption from failure, disappointment, misfortune and sorrow, that we would wish for ourselves.

It consists, furthermore, in extending to him the same aid and sympathy that we would gladly receive from others in similar circumstances. Finally, in rejoicing over his legitimate success and prosperity, even when we are less fortunate ourselves.

When these sentiments really and sincerely exist among men, they constitute what the apostle calls *mutual charity.*

He tells how to exercise it: "Using *hospitality* one toward another, *without murmuring,*" i. e., rendering mutual assistance, *cheerfully* and *without reluctance.*

Sharing what we have with our neighbor, according to his need: "As every man hath received *grace,* ministering to one another, as *good stewards* of the manifold *grace* of God."

The word *grace* here used in the sense of *any gift of God;* v. g., riches, intelligence, education, position or influence, etc.

All these gifts in reality belong to God. We hold them only as stewards.

II. *Motives* that should prompt this *mutual charity:*

1. The express command of God: "Thou *shalt* love thy neighbor as thyself."

2. Our common *origin,* and our common end. All creatures of the same Creator. Children of the same Father. All redeemed by the blood of the same Redeemer, who died equally for all.

All have a common end: *Eternity,* through the portal of *death, the great leveler.*

The tenure of life equally uncertain for all—for the rich, the powerful, the young and the healthy, as well as for the poor, the lowly, the aged, and the sickly.

3. *Our mutual dependence.* In more senses than one, "It is not good for man to be alone" (Gen. ii. 18).

Man is dependent upon his fellow man. *Society, intercourse, business relations* are, in a certain sense, as necessary to *human* life as the air we breathe. Without these things (i. e., in absolute isolation) man might indeed live *as* the *other animals;* but he would soon become *only an animal—not* a *human, rational, intellectual* being. Even when men are living together, no one man can minister to all his own wants—produce his own food and clothing, and the thousand things which have become for him *necessaries of life.*

Not only would the rich man find it hard to dispense with the services of his employees, but there is no man so poor that he would not suffer intensely if deprived of what he can have only by the labor and ingenuity of his fellow men.

4. Lastly, there is the moral obligation of *aiding* our fellow man, by example, admonition and encouragement, in order to protect him, or divert him from evil ways. "God made an everlasting covenant with *men;* and he shewed them his justice and his judgments; . . . and he said to them: Beware of all iniquity. And he gave to every one of them *commandment concerning his neighbor*" (Ecclus. xvii. 10-12).

This *commandment* includes the duties of justice and fraternal admonition, as well as those of charity in a more limited sense (cf. à Lapide, *in loco*).

III. May be easily shown, therefore, that there is no need to go outside the teachings of the Scriptures, and of the Church, in order to find *new principles* for the solution of the problem of *Socialism.*

None better can be found for the uplifting of mankind

Their proper application will result in the fullest possible realization of the beautiful but sometimes distorted ideal: "The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man."

There is nothing, however, in these *principles* of "Christian Socialism," to do away with *class distinctions,* or to bring about *absolute equality in worldly possessions.*

One who has no small claim to the title of "The Poet of Sociology" has truly said:

> "*Order* is Heaven's first law; and this confessed,
> Some are, and *must be,* greater than the rest,—
> More rich, more wise; but who infers from hence
> That such are *happier,* shocks all common sense.
> Heaven to mankind impartial we confess,
> If all are *equal in their happiness.*
> But *mutual wants* this happiness increase;
> All Nature's difference keeps all Nature's peace."
>
> —Pope, "Essay on Man," epistle iv., lines 49-56.

The rich are not always happier than those who manage either easily, or with a struggle, to gain a decent, honest living. The former have both their anxieties and their responsibilities.

They are only *stewards;* and death itself is not more certain than that they shall have to render an account of their *stewardship.*

On the other hand, to many who are happy in the possession of moderate means, riches would be a curse.

To assume the responsibility of *using riches properly* is not unlike the general leading the charge in battle.

Our blessed Lord Himself has given warning of the danger (Matt. xix. 24).

The observance of the precept of *mutual charity* would be helmet and buckler, and coat of mail to the rich.

It would secure to the poor man just compensation for his labor, and open to him every avenue of advancement, and amelioration of his condition.

It would make a stronger bond of union than any godless association.

It would give irresistible strength to attain all legitimate ends, without violating either the rights of man or the laws of God.

Conclusion.—Urge the precept as strongly as possible. Warn against *false principles* and ignorant or godless leaders.

No motto for the banner of Christian Socialism but this: "THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF."

Exhortation, to hearken to the words of the apostle: "Before all things have constant mutual charity among yourselves."

WHITSUNDAY.

The Descent of the Holy Ghost.

"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming; and it filled the whole house where they were sitting."—Acts ii. 2.

Exordium.—Promise made by Our Lord to His disciples, in His last discourse to them: "I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you forever. The Spirit of truth, whom the world can not receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him: but you shall know him, because he shall abide with you, *and be in you*" (John xiv. 16, 17).

Promise repeated (xiv. 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7). And again (Acts i. 8).

To-day's epistle gives the beautiful and thrilling account of the fulfilment of that promise.

Develop the picture: The disciples assembled together in prayer and expectation; their probable sentiments of fear, as on a previous occasion (John xx. 19). Uncertainty as to how or when the Paraclete was to come. The sudden, awe-inspiring announcement of the coming; the unprecedented apparition—the "tongues, as it were of fire." Yet no panic, no confusion. On the contrary, courage, joy, enthusiasm—complete transformation. Almost instantaneous spread of the news through the city. The gathering of the motley crowd; the appearance of the apostles on the scene, and the miracle that followed.

I. The twofold object of the decent of the Holy Ghost.

II. The miraculous gift of speech conferred upon the apostles.

III. Lessons taught us by the wonderful event.

I. The twofold object of the descent of the Holy Ghost.

1. To perpetuate the work of the redemption, by instructing, preparing and strengthening the apostles.

They were not yet prepared for the work allotted to them. Our Lord Himself had told them they were not: "I have yet many things to say to you; but you can not bear them now. But when *the Spirit of truth* is come, He will teach you all truth" (John xvi. 12, 13).

"And you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8).

2. All the circumstances of this wonderful event were admirably calculated to confirm for all time belief in the mystery of the most blessed Trinity, by bringing the Holy Ghost into equal prominence with the Father and the Son, and by showing clearly and unmistakably *His mission in the world.*

There had, indeed, been other remarkable apparitions; v. g., at the baptism of Our Lord, in the form of *a dove* (Matt. iii. 16), and at the transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 5), in the form of a *cloud.* (For symbolical meaning, cf. à Lapide in Acts ii. 2.).

But on the day of Pentecost He appeared in the form of *fire,* purifying and enlightening the poor, darkened, enfeebled human intellect, and elevating it to the contemplation of heavenly things.

And "as a mighty wind," symbolical of the strength and efficacy of the preaching of the apostles (Item à Lapide, *in loco*).

That preaching, strengthened *by the Spirit of God,* was to sweep before it all worldly power, wisdom and eloquence, to overthrow the monuments and strongholds of paganism, and to build upon their ruins THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

II. The miraculous gift of speech conferred upon the apostles.

Three opinions have been held as to the gift bestowed upon the apostles on this memorable occasion:

1. That they spoke in one language, their native tongue, and were understood by their hearers, each in his own "wherein he was born."

2. That they spoke all the various languages of the different nations they would have to evangelize.

3. That they received *both* these gifts, to be used according to circumstances (cf. à Lapide, in Acts ii. 4, *Variis Linguis*).

While the discussion of the question in a *popular* sermon or instruction might not be prudent or profitable (it would certainly divert the minds of the people from the more important and devotional features of the mystery), there seems to be no reason why the preacher might not, should he prefer, follow the *third opinion.*

(*a*) The different parts of the text seem rather to favor it. On the one hand, we read: "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak *with divers tongues*," i. e., *in various languages.* This is evidently said of the moment of their reception of the Holy Ghost. On the other hand, when the apostles appeared before the people, the latter were amazed at the fact that each one heard *in his own language wherein he was born;* and yet the number of different languages represented in the vast and motley gathering was doubtless far greater than the number of those who addressed them.

(*b*) It is not unreasonable to suppose the *twofold gift.*

That the illiterate apostles should receive an infused knowledge of all the languages of the various peoples whom they were destined to evangelize is most reasonable; nor was it less reasonable that they should be endowed with the *other gift* for such occasions as that of Pentecost Day, where persons of so many different tongues were to be addressed *at one time.* God surely *could* bestow such a gift.

It is believed that He *has* bestowed it more than once on apostolic men in later times: St. Vincent Ferrer is said to have been understood in *five,* and St. Francis Xavier in *twelve different languages,* while speaking in *only one* (cf. à Lapide, in Acts ii. 4).

Whatever the *form,* the *gift* was admirably adapted, as it was all-wisely intended to fit the apostles for *their mission.* Its value increased by the additional gift of *prudence* and *discretion* in speech: "They spoke according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak."

It was not by mere human learning and eloquence that they converted the world, but by that divine power of argument and persuasion which Our Lord had promised them: "You shall be brought before governors, and before kings, for my sake, *for a testimony to them, and to the Gentiles.* But when they shall deliver you up, take no thought how or what to speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what to speak. For it is not you that speak, but *the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you"* (Matt. x. 18-20).

III. Lessons taught us by this wonderful event:

1. The part which the Holy Ghost had in the founding of the Church of Christ—the *Holy Catholic Apostolic Church.*

2. The work of the Holy Ghost in preparing the apostles for their mission.

3. The work of the Holy Ghost in enlightening the minds of the multitude, and disposing them to hear and receive the truth.

This work the Holy Ghost has never ceased to perform. Offering His divine light to all, and sanctifying those who receive and follow it (cf. Manning, Internal Mission of the Holy Ghost, pp. 22, 23).

Conclusion.—Exhortation to rejoice in the glorious mystery commemorated to-day—the sending of the Paraclete and the founding of the Church.

Gratitude to God for making us know the Holy Ghost. Gratitude to the Holy Ghost for His work in the guidance of the Church, and in our own individual minds and souls. Gratitude to our divine Saviour for having purchased for us all these blessings. *"Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost!"*

TRINITY SUNDAY.

The Unsearchable Ways of God.

"How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways!"—Rom. xi. 33.

Exordium.—St. Paul, in writing to the early Christians of Rome, who were partly Jews and partly Gentiles, propounds a new, and to them a surprising doctrine, viz.: that *justification* is the *free gift* of God, not restricted to the Jews, nor to any other nation, but to Gentile as well as to Jew. "For there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. ii. 11).

"The justice of God by faith of Jesus Christ *unto all* and upon all them that believe in Him: for there is no distinction. For all have sinned and do need the glory of God. Being *justified freely* by His grace, through the redemption that is in *Christ Jesus*" (Rom. iii. 22-24).

He tells the Gentiles that their false learning had served only to reduce them to the lowest degradation (Rom. i.).

And tells the Jews that their vain observance *of the letter* of the Law had led them into fatal error, and provoked the wrath of God.

But he knew well that neither the Jews nor Gentiles would be able to fully grasp the sublime doctrine he was trying to teach them. Hence the beautiful words just read.

"O the depth of the riches of the wisdom, and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!"

They deserve to be impressed *upon us,* by a solemn command, as were the words of the law upon the Israelites of old: "These

words . . . shall be in thy heart: and thou shalt tell them to thy children; and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising" (Deut. vi. 6, 7).

We have great need to meditate upon them.

I. We can not expect to be able to fully *comprehend* the judgments of God. Nor should we attempt to search into His ways.

II. We may know and understand as much about them as is necessary and useful for us.

III. God's ways are not our ways; yet we may be sure that they are better for us than ours would be.

I. It is manifestly impossible for any human intelligence to *comprehend* the *judgments;* i. e., *the plans,* or *decrees* of God in regard to the creation and the government of the universe.

Even among men there are different grades of intelligence. Some few utterly out-reaching the scope of the large majority of the rest.

Illustrations.—The military genius planning a series of campaigns. A wise ruler or statesman providing by intelligent calculation for the welfare of a nation in all its varied interests. The electrician and the mechanical inventor, with their wonderful achievements. The *combination of talent* and *ingenuity,* as in the organization and operating of an immense railroad system, etc.

Explain any of these to a popular audience, even though composed of persons each thoroughly and practically intelligent in his own sphere of life, and how many of them would pretend to *comprehend* the whole scheme?

How many would think themselves competent to go over it in detail and point out its defects?

How many would claim to understand *all* these various works of human genius?

Yet what are they all in comparison with the works of God? What the whole aggregate of *intelligence* that produced them, in comparison with the *intelligence of God?*

"Whence cometh *wisdom,* and where is the place of *understanding?* It is hid from the eyes of all living. *God* understandeth the way of it, and *He* knoweth the place thereof. For He beholdeth the ends of the world: and looketh on all things that are under heaven" (Job xxviii. 20-24).

The conclusion may be easily and forcibly drawn.

Easy also to show the folly and rashness of searching into the ways of God.

Since God has infinite knowledge, He *knows how to do all things well.* And since He is infinitely *wise,* and infinitely *good,* He *can not* do *anything* but what is *for the best.*

To doubt or deny this, is nothing less than to doubt or deny that *God is God.*

God Himself has warned us not to search curiously or irreverently into His ways: "Seek not the things that are too high for thee; and search not into things that are above thy ability" (Ecclus. iii. 22).

II. We may and should know and understand enough about the ways of God's providence to inspire us with a loving confidence in Him.

1. We can not believe that He is really our Creator, first beginning, last end, and sovereign good, without believing also that He ordains *nothing whatsoever* that would necessarily be an obstacle to our attaining the end for which He created us—*eternal happiness.*

2. We know by explicit *revelation,* that He wills our good, and disposes all things concerning us, to that end.

Our Lord has revealed Him to us as *Our Father.*

Tells us to address Him by this endearing title: "Our Father" (Matt. vi. 9).

Tells us that this, our heavenly Father, knows better than any earthly father how to give *good things,* and *will* give them more bountifully "to them that ask Him" (ibid. vii. 11).

St. Paul tells us that God has sent His Holy Spirit into our hearts to teach us to call Him FATHER" (Gal. iv. 6).

How foolish and unreasonable, therefore, ever to distrust the goodness and mercy of God's dispensations in our regard.

III. We should know that "God's ways are not *our* ways"; and we should be sure that His ways are better for us than ours would be, could we follow them as we wish.

We may believe that whenever God thwarts our wishes He does so for our own good.

He denies us riches or deprives us of them, because He knows they will be an injury to us.

Often a plan upon which we have our heart set fails, God knowing it to be better for us that it should fail.

How often has a person's life been saved by missing a train or a boat.

We little dream or suspect how often our disappointments are nothing less than escapes from imminent danger.

We sometimes realize, though long after the event, that our "misfortunes" are in reality "blessings in disguise."

Would discover this to be the case far more frequently than we do, had we *more confidence in God.*

Conclusion.—Exhortation to pray earnestly for the grace of *deep reverence* for *the ways* and *the judgments* of God, and of *confidence in Him.* These dispositions will bring much sunshine into our lives. We shall realize the truth of the words of St. Paul:

"To them that love God, all things work together unto good" (Rom. viii. 28).

Shall be able to exclaim with him: "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom, and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!"

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

The Hatred of the World for the Servants of God.

"Wonder not if the world hate you."—I. John iii. 13.

Exordium.—Explain, if necessary, what is meant by the *world.* (cf. Sketch for Third Sunday after Easter.)

In the Epistle of to-day St. John speaks again of his favorite subject: The love which Christians should have for one another. And he suggests an additional reason why they should be *united* by this strong bond of *mutual love,* viz.: Because *Christians,* i. e., the true and faithful servants of God, *are,* both individually and as a body, *hated by the world.*

I. Reasons of this hatred. II. Christians have no reason to fear it. III. How they may withstand it.

I. Why the *world,* i. e., *the wicked,* hate those who try to serve God.

(a) Because the wicked are conscious that their own works *are evil.* It was this guilty consciousness that led Cain to kill his brother (I. John iii. 12).

(b) The life of the good is a reproach to the wicked; and the latter, according to the words of Holy Writ, say of the just man: "He is become a censurer of our thoughts. He is grievous unto us, even to behold: for his life is not like other men's and his ways are very different" (Wis. ii. 14, 15).

(c) They hate the just man because he refuses to share their views or approve their conduct: "We are esteemed by him as triflers, and he abstaineth from our ways, as from filthiness; and

he preferreth the latter end of the just, and glorieth that he hath God for his Father" (Wis. ii. 16).

(d) They hate the faithful Christian because they see that he enjoys the reward of his virtue, while they taste the bitter fruits of their folly and wickedness.

Lastly, there is a constant and direct opposition between *the motives* and *sentiments* of the servants of God and those of the votaries of the world: The Christian lives *to* and *for* God. The worldling lives solely for *himself.* However generous or disinterested he may seem to be, the real motive of his acts is *gratification,* or *love of self.* What other motive can be assigned for pride, ambition, luxury, or the baser passions?

Our Lord Himself has warned us of this hatred: "If you *were of the world,* the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, . . . therefore the world hateth you" (John xv. 19).

St. Paul gives us the same warning: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II. Tim. iii. 12).

II. True Christians have no reason to fear the hatred or antipathy of the *world.* It can do them no harm.

Even if persecuted by it, they have the divine promise that they shall triumph in the end, and shall witness the confusion of their enemies: "Then shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them.

"These, seeing it, shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the suddenness of their unexpected salvation.

"Saying within themselves, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit: These are they, whom we had some time in derision, and for a parable of reproach.

"We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honor.

"Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints.

"Therefore *we* have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us, and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us.

"We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways; but *the way of the Lord* we have not known" (Wis. v. 1-7).

Even before this final judgment comes the conduct of the wicked can not mar the happiness of those who love and serve God.

They are not obliged to associate with the ungodly.

They rejoice in the testimony of a good conscience.

Their uprightness must command the respect of *the world* in spite of its ridicule.

"They will put on *justice* as a breastplate, . . . and *equity* for an invincible shield" (ibid. v. 19, 20).

III. This *justice* and *equity* can not be found in man, unless "*the charity of God* abide in him."

But the *charity* (i. e., *the love*) of God can not abide in him without the love of his fellow man: "This is the commandment that we have from God: that he who loveth God, *love also his brother*" (I. John iv. 21).

The Christian's strength, therefore, wherewith he may withstand the malice and enmity of the world, is to be found *in the bond of mutual charity.*

This alone is sufficient to explain why St. John insists so unceasingly upon this fundamental Christian virtue; why St. Paul did the same in his epistles to the early converts to Christianity.

What more reasonable than this cordial *union* between *the children of God?*

The invincible strength of the helping-hand of *mutual Christian charity.* Each being willing, when necessary, to bear the other's burdens, according to the injunction of the apostle (Gal. vi. 2).

Aiding by counsel, admonition and encouragement. Kindly pardoning and condoning faults and endeavoring to preserve the good name of one's neighbor.

All striving together to bring the kingdom of God *upon earth,* and to gain admittance into the kingdom of God *in heaven.* For this did God, our Father, create us: and for this did Christ, our loving Saviour, redeem us; and for this does the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier, dwell in each and every soul that is not defiled by *mortal sin.*

Conclusion.—Strive to bring home forcibly to the minds of all the fact that there is a real, constant, never-ceasing antagonism between *the Christian's duty* and *the ways and maxims of the world;* that the ways of the Christian and of the worldling lie *in different directions;* that they should part company, as did Abraham and Lot (Gen. xiii. 7-9)—without strife or needless contention—the Christian all the while being ready, like Abraham, to lend a helping hand even to his misguided or unfortunate fellow being (ibid. xiv. 13-16).

Insist upon the fact that the servant of God has nothing to fear from the scoffs and enmity of *the world.*

Exhortation.—To pray for and strive to preserve that blessed spirit of *fraternal unity* for which our divine Saviour prayed on the eve of His Passion: "Holy Father, keep them in Thy name whom Thou hast given me [viz., His disciples], that they may be one, as we also are. . . . And not *for them only* do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in Me; that they may *all be one,* as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee" (John xvii. 11, 20, 21).

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

Submission to the Will of God.

"Be you humbled under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in the time of visitation."—I. Peter v. 6.

Exordium.—The meaning of these words of the prince of the apostles: They are an exhortation to us to be *absolutely submissive to the will of God.*

The *will of God* is not only expressed in the ten commandments, but is also manifested *in His divine Providence,* whether in the ruling of the universe or in His special dispensations in regard to each one of us. No profession of belief in God is correct and complete that does not recognize that *He is the Supreme Ruler of the universe,* and that nothing whatever happens in the physical or in the moral world but *by* His will or *with* His permission.

Those who believe this, and remember it, will find the burdens, the sorrows, the sufferings, and the disappointments of life far more easy to bear. They will understand three important truths:

I. What the apostle urges us to do is *most reasonable* and *not so difficult as we may imagine.* II. God requires it of us *not* arbitrarily or in anger and harshness, but *in kindness and love*—for our own greatest good. III. What He requires of us is nothing more than *we need to do* for our own protection.

I. It is most reasonable that we should "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God." Who are we? His creatures. "He made us, and not we ourselves" (Ps. xcix. 3). We are *creatures*—weak and helpless creatures—drawn forth *from nothing* by *His*

almighty power, and dependent upon *His preserving hand* for each moment of our existence.

He is eternal. "We are but of yesterday and are ignorant that our days upon earth are but a shadow" (Job viii. 9). "*We are as grass*—the grass withereth and the flower falleth, but the word of the Lord endureth forever" (Is. xl. 7, 8). "As a pebble of the sand so are a few years compared to eternity" (Ecclus. xviii. 8). "He that liveth forever created all things. Who is able to declare his works? For who shall search out his glorious acts?" (Ibid. vs. 1-3).

Being once thoroughly convinced of our own nothingness and God's infinite power and wisdom and goodness, we can not but find it *reasonable* to submit to the decrees and dispensations of His providence—to "humble ourselves under his mighty hand." Moreover, the consciousness of our inferiority and dependence makes our submission *less difficult.* This is true even in our relations with our fellow men. Strength, superiority, or any decided advantage, is always a convincing argument for a prudent man. A weak and delicate man will yield to the conditions imposed upon him by a giant or an athlete rather than attempt physical resistance. The man with a very limited capital will not antagonize a trust or a powerful corporation. A very weak and helpless nation will submit to the unjust encroachments of a powerful enemy rather than lose all by having recourse to arms. In all such cases the hopelessness of resistance brings prudent reflection and a consequent disposition to submit to the inevitable, even though there be evident injustice.

How incomparably easier, therefore, should it not be to accept the inscrutable dispensations of an all-wise, all-merciful and loving God—of our Father in heaven! "O Lord, give me understanding, and I will search thy law, and I will keep it with all my heart,

. . . for thy judgments are delightful. Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgment *is right*" (Ps. cxviii. 34, 39, 137).

II. God is not "*a hard Master.*" He does not require this humble subjection on our part in order to exercise harshly and inexorably His dominion over us. He has no need to do it. He has only to veil His benign countenance, and *leave us to ourselves,* and far worse would it be for us than were He to blot the sun from the heavens. He would immediately behold our ruin and hear our expiring wail as we would sink into the abyss of misery, degradation, suffering, and even *annihilation.*

Whatever He requires of us, or permits to befall us in this world, is *out of love for us* and *for our good.* How could it be otherwise? Would the prudent, devoted father have other motive than *the good of his children* in requiring of them obedience, in withholding from them things which they desire, and even in chastizing them for faults committed?

Would the artist wilfully destroy the most precious work of his hands? Or would he cease to value it, and by indifference and neglect, consign it to certain destruction?

Yet God is our Creator, and He must love the work of His hands. He is our Father, and can not inflict needless suffering; nor with cold indifference leave us to our own destruction. Hence the apostle's exhortation to confidence in God: "Cast thy care upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee" (Ps. liv. 23). Other words of the Psalmist: "Many are the afflictions of the just; but out of them all will the Lord deliver them. The Lord keepeth all their bones; not one of them shall be broken" (Ps. xxxiii. 20, 21).

Our divine Saviour's assurance of His Father's loving care: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and not one of them shall fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your

head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; better are you than many sparrows" (Matt. x. 29-31).

III. What God requires of us is nothing more than *we need to do* for our own protection and welfare. A proper sense of our dependence upon God necessarily increases our confidence in Him. Over-confidence *in ourselves* separates us from God, blinds us to our weakness, exposes us to the danger of being vanquished by our own evil propensities, or by the attacks of the enemy of our souls. Hence the warning: "Be sober and watch: because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour."

We need, therefore, to "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. For "Pride goeth before destruction: and the spirit is lifted up before a fall" (Prov. xvi. 18).

We need to "cast all our care upon him." For He alone can sustain us.

Pride, or over-esteem of ourselves, deprives us of the sympathy of our fellow men, as well as of the favor of God, who "resists the proud and gives His grace to the humble" (James iv. 6).

Concentration in ourselves blinds us to the trials and sufferings of our fellow beings. Hence when sorrow or misfortune comes to us our suffering is increased a hundredfold, because we *do not know* "that the same affliction befalls our brethren who are in the world."

Conclusion.—Exhortation to a lowly reverence for the *sovereign dominion* of God, and an humble submission to His holy will, especially in time of trial and adversity, saying, with holy Job: "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away: as it hath pleased the Lord, so it is done: blessed be the name of the Lord. . . . If we have received good things at the hand of God why should we not receive evil?" (i. 21; ii. 10).

Reminder: This humble submission to the holy will of God is not only the best test of *practical faith,* but it also brings consolation and reward.

Consolation, in the belief that God does all things for the best, "for those who love him" (Rom. viii. 28).

Reward, the hope of which is held out to us in the epistle to-day: "Be you humbled under the mighty hand of God, *that He may exalt you in the time of visitation.*"

This reward for trials patiently borne is promised to every faithful soul: "Blessed is the man that endureth *temptation* (trials), for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love him" (James i. 12).

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

Present Trials and Future Joys.

"I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared to the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us."—Romans viii. 18.

Exordium.—St. Paul, in the verses immediately preceding those just read declares that we have *the testimony of the* Spirit, "that we are *sons* of *God;* and if sons, heirs also: heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (vs. 16, 17).

He foresaw that this assertion might, and would, raise an objection, in the minds of many, viz.: If Christ has suffered for us, and redeemed us, and obtained for us the right and title of *sons of God,* why is there still so much misery and suffering in the world?

The answer is this: I. Man himself, and not God, is responsible for much of the suffering in the world. II. The wicked derive no lasting happiness from their apparent prosperity; while the sufferings of the just, when borne in union with Christ by Faith, unite them to God, and will obtain for them an eternal weight of glory. III. No amount of suffering *in this life,* therefore, is to be compared with the joy that is to follow *in the next.*

I. Much of the suffering in this world is of man's own making—the result of either his malice or his folly. Very frequently shattered health and premature death are the evident result of imprudence or sinful excesses.

Blighted prospects in life, public disgrace, and even the felon's brand, are due to intemperance, licentious indulgence or dishonesty.

Unfortunate marriages, with endless domestic unhappiness; all

due to folly, recklessness, or lack of ordinary Christian, or even *natural,* virtue.

Sorrow and suffering caused by wayward children. Sometimes, *a part* at least, and even the *greater part* of this misfortune, is due to the negligence of parents. At other times solely to the deliberate fault of the children themselves.

Lastly, *the suffering* which weighs constantly upon the mass of mankind *is poverty,* misfortune in business enterprises; the bitter struggle for a decent, comfortable livelihood, or even for existence.

No one can deny that a certain portion of this suffering is the result of improvidence, extravagance, shiftlessness, laziness.

Neither can it be denied that *all the rest of it* is due to the selfishness of man—his heartlessness toward his fellow man—to the *animal greed* of the few in accumulating wealth, regardless of the poverty, misfortune and privations of hundreds and thousands whose honest efforts they thwart, or whose misfortune they could avert or relieve.

God is in no sense the author of or responsible for any of these evils. They are solely the work of man.

They should not exist among those who "have received the spirit of adoption of *sons,* whereby we cry: Abba, Father."

II. Whatever the apparent happiness and prosperity of the wicked or the godless, they are not to be envied. "They that depart from the Lord shall be written in the earth" (Jer. xvii. 13).

No man can lead a wicked life with impunity; nor will his misfortunes and sufferings be mitigated by either merit or consolation: "Your iniquities," saith the prophet, "have divided between you and your God; and your sins have hid his face from you, that he should not hear" (Is. lix. 2). "He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh at them, and the Lord shall divide them" (Ps. ii. 4).

No man can afford to despise religion, or refuse to obey the teachings of divine revelation:

"You have despised all my counsel and have neglected my reprehensions. I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock when that shall come to you which you feared" (Prov. i. 25, 26).

Their end is destruction, unless they repent: "As the tongue of fire devoureth the stubble, and the heat of the flame consumeth it, so shall their root be as ashes, and their bud shall go up as dust; for they have cast away the law of the Lord of Hosts, and have blasphemed the word of the Holy One of Israel" (Is. v. 24).

On the contrary, those who love God and are united to Him through Faith (not without *works* of course,) in our Lord Jesus Christ, have every assurance that their sufferings and misfortunes shall be followed by joy and happiness. "You now indeed have sorrow," says our blessed Lord, "but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice: and your joy no man shall take from you" (John xvi. 22).

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are ye, when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil of you, untruly, *for my sake:* Be glad and rejoice; for your reward is very great in heaven" (Matt. v. 5, 11, 12).

"The apostles went from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus" (Acts v. 41).

"My brethren," says St. James, "count it all joy when you shall fall into *divers temptations* (i. e., be subjected to trials and sufferings), knowing that *the trying of your Faith* worketh patience. And patience hath a perfect work that you may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing" (James i. 2-4).

Trials and sufferings borne in patience and in faith are therefore the surest guarantee of future happiness.

III. But no amount of suffering that we may be called upon to bear *in this life* can be compared with the joy and happiness that are to follow *in the next.*

This is what St. Paul explicitly affirms: "I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us." It is difficult, even impossible, for us to fully realize the nature and extent of those joys, for St. Paul tells us: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (I. Cor. ii. 9).

Nevertheless we know enough to sustain our hope. We believe in God, and that He "is a rewarder to them that seek him" (Heb. xi. 6). We know that His bounty is infinite. Our Lord tells us that our Father in heaven is far more kind and generous to us than our earthly fathers can possibly be (Luke xi. 13), and that in that Father's house "there are many mansions" (John xiv. 2).

We know, too, that God in His infinite justice will give us a joy for every sorrow, a pleasure for every pain that we shall have endured for His sake, or in submission to His holy will.

Lastly, we know that the joys of heaven will be *eternal,* while the sufferings of this life will soon have an end. For, in the New Jerusalem, "God will wipe away all tears; and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more; for *the former things* are passed away" (Apoc. xxi. 4).

Conclusion.—To remember in time of trial and discouragement these consoling assurances, which God Himself has deigned to give us by the mouth of His divine Son, and of His prophets and apostles. The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared to the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

The Fruitful Christian Life.

"He that will love life and see good days, . . . let him decline from evil and do good."—I. Peter iii. 10, 11.

Exordium.—All men *love life* and desire to see *good days.* The love of the worldling is for this present life only, and his desires are for its fleeting joys. The sincere Christian fixes his affection upon *the life to come;* and he desires to "see good days" *in the house of his Father in heaven:* "Better is one day in thy courts above thousands. I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners" (Ps. lxxxiii. 11).

We are told in the epistle to-day that *two things* are necessary in order to attain to this *eternal happiness:* To *avoid evil,* i. e., *sin;* and to *do good.* Neither of these conditions without the other is sufficient to make up the full and *fruitful* Christian life on earth, which alone is entirely pleasing to God. No *good, worthy of eternal reward,* can be accomplished without *avoiding* evil; but the effort merely to *avoid evil,* without any desire to *do good,* is very liable to lead one into fatal illusion. Therefore let us weigh well these words of the apostle.

I. *Decline from evil.* The ten commandments are indeed the *foundation of all true morality.*

Yet they are almost entirely *prohibitive* in their nature. They tell us what we are *not to do.* They teach us to *decline from evil.* Not to worship false gods; not to dishonor the one true God by irrever-

ence for His holy name, but to honor Him with becoming worship, and to honor our parents with respect and obedience, as *representing Him.*

Such the substance of the first four commandments; while the other six tell us what we are *not to do* against our neighbor.

Observing faithfully all these commandments, we "*decline from evil.*" We fulfill the law of *fear* and of *bondage.* But it is *possible* to keep the ten commandments, or at least to make a very persistent effort to do so, and yet fall short of one's *whole duty* as a Christian. They may be kept in more or less of the spirit of the Scribes and Pharisees. Our Lord has told us that this is not sufficient: "Unless your *justice* abound *more* than that of the Scribes and Pharisees you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v. 20). Or they may be kept in a spirit of servile fear and suspicion, as it were, of Almighty God Himself. Fearing lest He should get more than His due. Looking upon Him as "a hard Master."

Our Lord has condemned this spirit severely in the parable of the talents (Matt. xxv. 24-30). The servant was not condemned for *dishonesty,* or for anything that *he had done,* but for what he *had not done*—for being *unprofitable.*

It is much to be feared that those who attempt to keep the commandments in a narrow, cold, calculating spirit, with little real *love* for God, and apparently less for their neighbor, may also receive the reproach of being *unprofitable servants.* The *barren fig tree* whose leaves withered under the malediction of Our Lord is regarded as a type of those who lead a selfish, *fruitless* life (cf. à Lapide in Matt. xxi. 20).

II. Decline from evil and *do good.* All the commandments must, of course, be faithfully observed. Our Lord Himself has said so: "Amen, I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one

tittle shall not pass of the law, till all be fulfilled. He, therefore, that shall break one of the least commandments, and shall so teach men, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v. 18, 19). But the Jews were prone to follow *the letter* rather than *the spirit.* So are many Christians.

Hence Our Lord, in pure kindness and commiseration, told the Jews on a certain occasion: "It is *the spirit* that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing" (John vi. 64). And St. Paul, understanding what is meant by *the flesh,* says: "The *letter* killeth" (II. Cor. iii. 6). Moreover, when Our Lord was asked which is the great commandment of the law, He summarized them all in these two: "Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God with thy whole heart." "And thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. xxii. 36-39).

Love, therefore, is *the spirit* that gives *life* to the observance of the law. This is why Our Lord reproached the Pharisees with having neglected "the weightier things of the law: *judgment,* and *mercy,* and *faith*" (cf. à Lapide in Matt. xxiii. 23).

He tells also both the Pharisees and all those who are too solicitous about hoarding wealth to *give alms,* for the purification and greater perfection of the soul (Luke xi. 41; xii. 33).

It is alms-giving *in its broadest sense*—material aid, sympathy, encouragement and moral support—that fills up the measure of the Christian's duty—that makes the *fruitful Christian life.*

That is, *not* merely giving to those who are in abject want, but lending a helping hand to any of your fellow men, or to any good work that may tend to the moral uplifting of society. This done, of course, in obedience to and in the spirit of the two great commandments of the law—*love* of *God* and love of neighbor.

"He who soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who soweth in blessings shall also reap blessings. Every one as he hath

determined in his heart, not with sadness, or of necessity: *for God loveth the cheerful giver"* (II. Cor. ix. 6, 7).

"Give, and it shall be given to you: good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over shall they give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, *it shall be measured to you again"* (Luke vi. 38).

Here it is not merely a question of giving to the starving poor, but of *good works,* that shall have their reward (cf. Context, and also Matt. vii. 2 and Mark iv. 24).

III. Numberless ways in which *good* may be done to our fellow man: Helping the poor; providing for the widow and the orphan; visiting the sick and the unfortunate. (See what Our Lord has promised to say at the last day. Matt. xxv. 34-36.) Contributing to works for the suppression of vice and the protection of the innocent; homes for the aged and destitute; hospitals for the sick; schools for the instruction of the young; Catholic libraries, smaller or larger, according to needs and circumstances.

Doing all for *the love of God* and *love of neighbor; not* through *selfish vanity*—erecting a monument to oneself, instead of honoring *God, the Giver of all good gifts.* Thousands of occasions also may be found in which those who have means might, without sacrifice, help their poorer, honest and intelligent and energetic fellow men to rise to a higher plane of usefulness. Sad and deplorable to think how much of human talent, energy and real merit is allowed to perish through *cold indifference and neglect*—through lack of *the helping hand.*

Conclusion.—Exhortation to take to heart this all-important lesson: Not only *avoid evil,* but *strive to do good.*

The lesson is for all. There are very few persons in the world who do not believe themselves to be better off in some respects than

some of their neighbors. Let the stronger help the weaker. "Take heed thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandments of the Lord Our God. Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person, for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee. According to thy ability be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so, to bestow *willingly* a little. For thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity" (Tobias iv. 6-10). Let there be in the correctness of your life "love of brotherhood, and in love of brotherhood *charity*. For if these things be with you and abound, they will make you to be *neither empty* nor *unfruitful* in the knowledge of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore, labor the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election" (II. Peter i. 7, 8, 10).

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

The Consistent Christian Life.

"All we who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized in His death. For we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that as Christ is risen from the dead, by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life."—Rom. vi. 3, 4.

Exordium.—The untiring zeal of our Holy Mother Church, in constantly keeping before our minds the teaching of our divine Saviour and His apostles—thus preserving unchanged the unity and apostolicity of the Faith—the divine deposit, unaltered, unimpaired.

To-day she sets before us more of the teaching of St. Paul to the first Christians of Rome—recent converts from Judaism and paganism.

The fearless apostle, the uncompromising champion of truth, tells them plainly and forcibly, that it will avail nothing to be *half-way* converts—Christians *only in name.* That if they wish to be Christians, they must *die* to sin, and *live* to God, by following *the example* and *the teaching* of our divine Saviour.

In this he merely asks them to put into their lives something which all honest men admire, but in which all men are liable to fail—CONSISTENCY.

I. What is understood by *Consistency* in human actions or moral conduct; and how the world regards it. II. What the Christian professes, and what his obligations. III. Evil consequences of *Inconsistency* on the part of the Christian.

I. By *Consistency,* in regard to human actions, or moral conduct, is understood *agreement,* or *conformity* between our actions and what we profess to be our real sentiments, convictions or intentions. Absence of contradiction between the one and the other.

Men habitually expect, and even demand, this *consistency* of one another.

In ordinary business transactions a man is expected to be faithful to his word and his contract.

In societies or associations the members are expected to live up to the obligations assumed upon admission to membership.

In politics loyalty to party and party *principles,* or at least to party *measures.*

In grave matters of citizenship a man must be loyal to his country or be branded *a traitor.*

To the honor of mankind it may be said that fidelity to these obligations is observed to a commendable extent, and that failure is visited with salutary condemnation and opprobrium.

II. The Christian professes to believe in Jesus Christ, to follow His teaching—His example and His precepts. The Catholic believes firmly in the divinity as well as in the humanity of Christ.

That being truly God, He took upon Himself our human nature; revealed to us, more clearly than it had been revealed before, the will of God in our regard; and suffered and died for our redemption, i. e., for our reconciliation with God, after the fall brought about by the sin of Adam and Eve. The Catholic believes that *by baptism* he is made a child of God and restored to the inheritance which he had lost by the transgression of the head of the human race (cf. Rom. v. 12).

He, when he comes to the use of reason, accepts and ratifies the obligations assumed for him by his sponsors in baptism: "To re-

nounce satan and all his works and pomps," i. e., to war against the evil propensities of his nature and to resist the false maxims, evil ways, and sinful allurements of the "world."

Here explain St. Paul's symbolical language in regard to baptism: Represents *death to sin; burial with Christ* (he speaks of *immersion*), and *resurrection with Him.* Crucifixion of "*the old man,* that the *body* of sin may be destroyed, to the end that we may serve sin no longer."

"The old man," i. e., man as he is born into the world, *unregenerated,* and inheriting all the propensities to sin, engendered and transmitted by the sin of Adam. Recall the conversation of Our Lord with Nicodemus (John iii. 3-7).

"The body of sin," i. e., the aggregate of evil passions and propensities to sin, which will be *destroyed* if "the old man be *crucified* by faithfully following Our Lord's example and precepts.

"For he that is *dead* is *justified* from sin," i. e., *loosed, liberated* from sin; placed in such a condition that sin can not affect him—make any impression upon him. Just as the *corpse* even of a profligate, who had been a slave to his passions to the last days of his life, is utterly insensible to all that passes around it; so should be the regenerated soul that has truly *died with Christ* (cf. à Lapide in Rom. vi. 6, 7).

Such the imperfect summary of what the Catholic believes and *professes.* Nothing nobler, higher, more sacred. Nothing more independent of all mere human considerations or human influences.

It is man's acknowledgment of his *personal relations* and *personal obligations to God.*

He professes to believe that certain duties and a certain manner of life are incumbent upon him and upon all other men.

He professes to be *a follower of Christ* and a *faithful servant of God.*

He professes to believe it to be his duty "to walk in newness of life."

To do this, so far as human frailty will permit, is to lead a *consistent Christian life.*

III. To fail in this, i. e., to be *inconsistent* with one's *religious profession,* deserves the same reprobation that is meted out to inconsistency in mere temporal or worldly affairs; deserves even severer condemnation—and will surely receive it—*not* from *man, but* from *God.* Because not only are the obligations assumed more sacred, but the evil following from infidelity to them is far greater. When a man proves false to his professions and obligations in worldly affairs, he may weaken confidence to some extent in his fellow men; and the result is greater caution, at least for a time; but the world goes on with its affairs as before.

When a man makes profession of being *moral, virtuous*—"a regular Church member"—and fails notoriously to live up to what he professes, he brings religion into contempt, causes dogma and revelation to be rejected, and even God and our divine Saviour to be reviled. Such conduct moved St. Paul even to tears: "For many walk of whom I have told you often (and now tell you weeping), that they are *enemies of the cross of Christ"* (Philip. iii. 18).

Sad, but undeniable, that inestimable harm is thus done by many professing to be Catholics. The teaching of the Church is sublime. No body of moral teaching ever proposed on earth reaches so completely the moral needs of man, or aids him so effectively to avoid evil, and attain the end for which he was created.

But the Catholic Church is *not* a *fashionable club* or *social organization.* Her membership is not restricted to the *élite.* She is a *divine institution,* fulfilling her mission *in the spirit* of her *divine Founder,* who came "to call *not* the just, but *sinners"* (Mark ii. 17).

Hence the Church does not expel or disown her weak members. But they bring untold disgrace and reproach upon her. They give coloring to the false and malicious accusation sometimes made that she *encourages sin,* and by her *indulgences* gives permission to commit it. The accusation can not, of course, be *honestly* made; but *dishonest* accusers may find a *semblance of proof* in the *lax*—not to say *scandalous*—conduct of many *nominal,* and of not a few *sincere,* but *weak* Catholics. It is a question the answer to which is known to the omnipotent God alone, *whether more souls have been lost to the Faith by heretical teaching* or *by scandal.*

Conclusion.—Exhortation: To try always and without ceasing to lead a *sincere, consistent Christian life;* to remember the words of Our Lord: "He that is not *with* me is *against* me, and he that *gathereth* not with me, *scattereth*" (Matt. xii. 30); and those of St. Paul: "Give no offence to any man, *that our ministry may not be blamed*" (II. Cor. vi. 3).

"Be without offence to the Jews and to the Gentiles, and *to the Church of God*" (I. Cor. x. 32).

Finally, to remember the lesson taught in to-day's epistle: "We are buried together with Christ, by baptism into *death,* that as Christ is risen from the dead, by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life."

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

The Choice Between Vice and Virtue.

"The wages of sin is death, but the grace of God, life everlasting in Christ Jesus Our Lord."—Rom. vi. 23.

Exordium.—Man in the beginning had good and evil set before him, and was free to choose which he would. He made his choice, *not well;* and the result was a heritage of misfortune to his race. God, for His own wise reasons, has never withdrawn the ennobling but dangerous gift of *free will* from man. He is still free to choose between *good* and *evil.* And he still, as in all time past, too frequently chooses the latter in preference to the former. In to-day's epistle the apostle shows clearly how fatal, and at the same time how unreasonable, such a choice is. He urges his new converts to make a better choice; to turn from vice to virtue; from the slavery of sin to the service of God.

He assures them that he is asking of them nothing that is *beyond their power of accomplishment,* but only what is reasonable—asking them to make an effort that really *costs no more* than does the servitude of a sinful life: "I speak to you, *a human thing,* because of the infirmity of your flesh" (cf. à Lapide in Rom. vi. 19).

I. In a sinful life there is only degradation, disappointment and remorse. II. The sinner is a servant or hireling, and the wages he receives from his master is *death eternal.* III. The servants of God "have their fruit unto sanctification; and the end *life everlasting.*"

I. *Sin is degrading.* It expels the Holy Ghost from the soul; the soul from its Father's house. It is no longer in the friendship

of God. There is *interior* desolation and poverty. As by the sin of our first parents their intellect was shorn of its highest and brightest powers; so now, by sin, the soul is despoiled of its noblest and purest affections, its highest aspirations, its sweetest consolations; it shrinks from its own unsightly nakedness, as did Adam and Eve, after their fall, from the holy presence of God. Shrinks even from the thought of the good it had known and loved. Its affections and appetites are changed. The sad change forcibly expressed by the author of the Imitation: "They whose works seemed praiseworthy have fallen to the very lowest, and such as before fed upon *the bread of angels,* I have seen delighted with the *husks of swine*" (Bk. iii. ch. 14). There is also *exterior* degradation: Youths * and maidens of fair promise and bright prospects. All blighted and blasted by the unfortunate choice of *evil* instead of *good.* The *degradation* that comes later in life to those who yield to the seductions of sin; by drunkenness, dishonesty, sensuality, infidelity to the sacred obligations of married life.

Disappointment in the life of sin:

No evil deed ever yet fully satisfied the desires and expectations of the perpetrator. Once accomplished, new and unforeseen aspects of the deed present themselves—sometimes disgusting, sometimes even appalling.

Often the consummation of the act is impossible, or the attempt a failure; but *the guilt* of the desire and intention remains undiminished.

Even when the object of a sinful desire is attained, the pleasure or gratification vanishes immediately, leaving nothing behind but regret, remorse, or shame. "What fruit therefore," asks the apostle,

* For a sermon or address to young men, cf. lecture by Very Rev. T. N. Burke, O.P., "Our Catholic Young Men," etc. (Burke's Sermons and Lectures.)

"had you then, in those things of which you are now ashamed?"

Lastly, *remorse* at the thought of the evil done, and the good lost perhaps forever. The Prodigal Son; the wayward daughter; the father that has wrecked his home and disgraced his children, etc.

II. The sinner is a servant or hireling. There is less freedom in a life of sin than in a life of virtue. The sinner voluntarily yields himself to "live according to the flesh."

The *habit of sin* weakens the will; so that when the sinner "has a will to do good, evil is ever present to him." How often does not the poor sinner weep over his bondage, and resolve and promise to break away from it and mend his ways! How often is he not thoroughly sincere; yet how soon he falls again! Sad and pitiable state: "As a dog that returneth to his vomit, so is the fool that returneth to his folly" (Prov. xxvi. 11).

He is the veritable *slave* of his passions—of *sin:* "For by whom a man is overcome, of the same also is he the slave" (II. Pet. ii. 19). But having "*yielded* his members to serve iniquity unto iniquity," he shall reap according to his sowing: "He that soweth iniquity shall reap evils" (Prov. xxii. 8). "Be not deceived: God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. For he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption" (Gal. vi. 7, 8).

The sinner is *selfish.* He seeks his own gratification. "Serves iniquity" for *a compensation,* for *wages*; and "the wages of sin is—*death.*" Death of health, of conscience, of happiness in this world; *eternal death* in the next.

III. Not so with those who lead a life of virtue. They are not *slaves.* They are indeed *servants of God*, but "to serve him, is to reign." They "are not children of *the bond woman,* but of *the free,* by the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free" (Gal. iv. 31).

They are *children of God,* simply making good use of the daily gifts received from their Father. The child who makes a good and reasonable use of the gifts and privileges received from his rich and generous father does not thereby establish any claim, *by strict right,* against his Father for more. But he has enjoyed what he has received far more than if he had squandered it in sinful indulgence. He may also confidently expect a continuance of his father's bounty, and to receive from him finally a goodly inheritance. Such the *life of virtue:* A proper, faithful use of God's gifts and graces.

No *strict claim* to any reward for so doing. "For it is God who worketh in *us,* both to will and to accomplish, according to *His* good will" (Philip. ii. 13).

But the virtuous have the firm hope of the continuance of their heavenly Father's bounty, the assurance that they "shall have their fruit unto sanctification, and the end life everlasting."

They do not work for servile wages. They believe that they "shall be delivered from the *servitude* of corruption into the *liberty* of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. viii. 21).

Hence St. Paul speaks of the *wages* of sin; but *not* of the *wages* of virtue (cf. à Lapide in Rom. vi. 22).

Conclusion.—Exhortation to weigh well "the wages of sin." The inspired words of the apostle should be believed, had we no other knowledge of the evils of sin. What words ever had greater proof, daily and hourly, around us—perhaps in our own experience?

Thanks be to God we *have our own experience* of the rewards of virtue. *Virtue* is the development, the ennobling, and the perfecting of our being, according to the will and the gracious assistance of God. *Sin* is our degradation, ruin, *eternal death. Virtue* is *liberty; sin, slavery.* Who will hesitate in his choice? "The wages of sin is death. But the grace of God, life everlasting in Christ Jesus Our Lord."

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

Who May and Who Shall be Saved.

"We are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die: but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live."—Rom. viii. 12, 13.

Exordium.—These words of St. Paul, considered in the light of all his earnest, ardent and eloquent teaching, unquestionably mean this:

I. No human being is the *necessary* slave of sin; for Our Lord has paid the ransom of all for the sin of Adam; and God allows no one to be tempted "above what he is able to bear."

II. No one may deliberately "yield his members as instruments of iniquity unto sin," without receiving the wages thereof, which is *death* (Rom. vi. 13, 23).

III. No one may reject the grace of God, offered through the mediation of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and refuse to live according to the precepts of the Gospel, and hope to see *life eternal.*

IV. Those, and those only, who believe that Jesus Christ is God, and, living according to *His spirit,* mortify the deeds of the flesh, *shall live.*

I. Some *false teachers* have asserted that man's free will was destroyed by the sin of Adam—at least so far as to prevent him from resisting successfully the corrupt inclinations of his evil passions.

Others have maintained that man's will is so weak that even with the grace that God gives him, he is unable to keep some of the commandments (cf. Tanquerey, De Gratia, Proleg., pp. 24-27).

Many unfortunate persons, after repeatedly "yielding their members as instruments of iniquity unto sin," despair of God's mercy, and imagine that reform is, for them, impossible.

All this is *utterly false,* and has been explicitly condemned by our Holy Mother Church, the faithful guardian and infallible teacher of *the Word of God.*

Council of Trent, Sess. VI.: "If any one saith that since Adam's sin, the free will of man is lost or extinguished, . . . let him be anathema" (Can. 5).

"If any one saith that the commandments of God are, even for one in the state of grace, impossible to be kept; let him be anathema" (Can. 18).

In perfect accordance with the words of Holy Scripture: "God desires not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked *turn from his way* and live" (Ezech. xxxiii. 11).

God does not *desire* what is *impossible.*

The sinner, therefore, *is able* to "turn from his way" at any time. And God has promised him pardon: "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow; and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool" (Is. i. 18).

God's commandments are not impossible of fulfillment.

Our Lord says: "Do not think that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For amen I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall not pass of the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. v. 17, 18). Yet He also tells us: "My yoke is sweet and my burden light" (Matt. xi. 30). And He adds the consoling assurance: "I came *not* to call the *just,* but *sinners,* to repentance" (Luke. v. 32).

Man is never under the *necessity* of yielding to temptation. This is what St. Paul means when he says, "We are not *debtors to the*

flesh, to act according to the flesh." For he says explicitly: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able: but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it" (I. Cor. x. 13).

II. No one may deliberately lead a sinful, profligate life. "For if you live according to the flesh, *you shall die.*" Daily experience proves the truth of the apostle's words. Speedy and evident retribution visited upon those who set at naught the commands of God, and violate even the laws of nature by yielding without restraint to the corrupt inclinations of *the flesh*—to intemperance, immorality, debauchery, etc.

Loss of self-respect, loss of health. Fair future blighted. Wreck of the home—if there be one. Loss of all the decent comforts and legitimate pleasures and consolations of manhood, and of womanhood. Loss of all that even the world esteems as *respectable.* A life without honor. Death without hope.

III. No one may hope for *life eternal* who rejects the grace of God, offered through the mediation of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and refuses to live according to the precepts of the Gospel.

Yet there are many, very many who do this.

They, too, "live according to the flesh"—not following its lower instincts, but *for the world,* and according to *the maxims of the world.*

No higher standard than *worldly respectability.*

No higher ambition than to achieve *worldly prosperity.* For this they rely solely and with confidence upon their natural intelligence and their own moral strength.

Have no proper conception or appreciation of the higher *supernatural* life.

Little thought of what there is beyond the grave. Neither

ask for, nor desire the assistance of God's grace. Do they believe in God? Do they believe in *eternal life,* and desire it?

Do they believe in Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God? If so, they should believe His words: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but *by me*" (John xiv. 6). "No man *can* come to me, except the Father *draw him;* and I will raise him up in the last day" (Ibid. vi. 44). "Without me, you can do nothing" (Ibid. xv. 5).

St. Paul tells us: "It is God who worketh in you both *to will* and *to accomplish,* according to *His good will*" (Philip. ii. 13). Innumerable other texts of Scripture prove that man, even by his best endeavors, can not attain to *eternal life* without the assistance of God's grace.

Again the Church has been faithful to her *teaching mission:* "If any one saith that man may be *justified* before God *by his own works, without the grace of God,* let him be anathema."

And "If any one saith that the man already *justified* is able *to persevere, without the special help of God,* let him be anathema" (Conc. Trid., Sess. VI., Can. 1, 23).

Herein the condemnation of those who will not *hear* the Word, or *hearing* will not *do it:* "Who like not to have God in their knowledge" (Rom. i. 28). "All that forsake thee, O Lord, shall be confounded: they that depart from thee shall be written in the earth" (Jer. xvii. 13).

IV. Those, and those only, who, "by the spirit mortify the deeds of the flesh, *shall live.*"

The *spirit* whereby this is to be done is the spirit of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The spirit whereby "we are buried together with Him into death; that as *He* is risen from the dead, so we also may walk in the new-

ness of life. . . . Knowing this, that *our old man* is crucified with Him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, to the end that *we may serve sin no longer.*"

The spirit whereby we are not only released from the bondage of sin, but are also made *sons of God:* "For you have not received the *spirit of bondage* again, *in fear;* but you have received the *spirit of adoption* of sons, whereby we cry: Abba, *Father.*

And if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ: yet so, *if we suffer with Him,* that we may also be glorified with him."

Few words about the virtues of the Christian life: Faith; reverence for God, and for the teachings of the Gospel. Prayer for the divine assistance. Fidelity in the practice of the Faith—not only in observing the precepts of the Church, but in daily life—in all social and business relations: "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father, who is in heaven" (Matt. v. 16).

Conclusion.—All may be saved. Those who live according to the flesh surely *will not;* but only those "who hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke xi. 28).

Exhortation and encouragement to the weak and unfortunate.

Warning to the negligent and self-confident.

Encouragement to all those who, "by the spirit," try to "mortify the deeds of the flesh," and to live according to the example and precepts of our divine Saviour.

"Stand fast, and be not held again under the yoke of bondage" (Galat. v. 1).

"For you are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to the flesh."

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

The Danger of Presumption.

"Let him that thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall."—I. Cor. x. 12.

Exordium.—The epistle just read gives us a clear and forcible warning against *Presumption.*

Definition: "Unreasonable confidence of being favored or borne with by Almighty God."

It seems to suppose three dispositions utterly unbecoming, not to say *fatal,* in man: *First,* a lack of appreciation and gratitude for the gifts of God; *secondly,* a lack of reverence for the Giver; *thirdly,* over-confidence in one's self—*pride*—which always provokes the displeasure of God.

St. Paul (I.) shows us, from the example of the Jews, how God punishes ingratitude and lack of reverence; (II.) warns us against over-confidence in ourselves; (III.) gives us salutary instruction in regard to *temptations.*

I. The Jews had received greater marks of God's favor than any other people since the fall of Adam.

In all their bitter trials during their bondage in Egypt they had preserved the remembrance of the promises made to their father Abraham.

God in His own good time had sent them a deliverer (Moses), and "with a strong hand and a stretched-out arm" (Deut. v. 15) rescued them from their oppressors.

Yet they were not two months' journey from the land of their degradation before they "coveted evil things," desiring to return to

the "flesh pots" and servitude of Egypt, rather than bear the temporary trials of their deliverance.

Murmuring for water in the mountain gorge at Raphidim before reaching Sinai (Exod. xvii. 1-3).

Even while Moses was receiving the Law on the Mount they set up the golden calf in the valley and worshipped it with indecent revelry. For which sin twenty-three thousand perished by the wrath of God.

Not long upon their journey, before they sicken of the heaven-sent manna, and again clamor for the flesh and the fish, the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic of Egypt (Num. xi. 4-6).

While thus murmuring a superabundance of quail appear in the midst of the camp and around it.

The people satisfy their cravings, and while "as yet the flesh was between the teeth, . . . behold the wrath of the Lord being enkindled against *them, He* struck them with an exceeding great plague" (Num. xi. 31-33).

Thus throughout the forty years' wanderings:

Repeated murmurings in spite of God's repeated manifestation of His power, goodness and special love for the Israelites—which love they recognized only to presume upon it and tempt Him to anger.

Result of these repeated transgressions: "In the wilderness shall your carcasses lie. All you that were numbered, from twenty years old and upward, and have murmured against me, shall not enter into the land, . . . except Caleb and Josue" (Num. xiv. 29, 30).

The sentence executed, exception not being made even for Aaron (Num. xx. 20-29), nor for Moses (Deut. i. 35-38).

II. St. Paul tells us that, "All these things happened to them *in figure,* and are written *for our correction,* upon whom *the ends of the world* are come.

[Some commentators explain the words "the ends of the world" to mean the last or Christian age of the world, which had been preceded by the Patriarchal and Mosaical periods. (Ita Kenrick et à Lapide, in loco.)]

As with the Jews, so with the Christians of St. Paul's day—and of our own—there were and are those who receive the gifts of God and abuse them, presuming upon His forbearance or upon their own strength and merits—like the proud Pharisee (Luke xviii. 9-14), or the prodigal son (Luke xv. 11-32).

"They whose works seemed praiseworthy have fallen to the very lowest; and such as before fed upon the bread of angels, I have seen delighted with the husks of swine" (Imitat., Bk. iii. Cap. xiv. 1).

Three classes of persons who are liable to fall by *presumption* or over-confidence in themselves:

First. Those who have fallen seriously before and have been lovingly received again into their Father's house, like the prodigal, and who do not suspect or realize their own weakness.

Secondly. Those who are well satisfied with themselves, and neglect their religious duties—approach the Sacraments rarely or perhaps not at all.

Thirdly. Those who find regularity in the *exterior* or *routine observance* of their religious duties comparatively easy—even rather agreeable; at least feel that it is *the respectable thing* to do, but in reality have very little Christian charity or generosity and self-denial in their hearts.

To all these the warning of the apostle applies: "He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall."

Also these other words: "God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble" (James iv. 6).

III. A salutary instruction in regard to temptations:

Two kinds of temptations: *First,* mere spontaneous emotions or passing thoughts or pictures of the imagination—suggestive, indeed, of sin, but not preceded or produced by any deliberate thought or act of the will.

Consequently they do not, by *the mere fact of their occurrence,* leave any stain of sin upon the soul.

Of these St. Paul speaks when he says: "Let no temptation take hold on you, but *such as is human,*" i. e., "incidental to man—inseparable from human nature in its present condition—'small, brief, moderate.'" (Kennick, in loco. Item à Lapide, cum Patribus ab ipso citato.)

These may be easily banished or overcome by simply averting the mind or attention from them, or they may pass away as they came.

Other temptations are those which either originate in evil desires, or which, when occurring, are deliberately contemplated with sinful pleasure; or, again, which are the result *foreseen* of certain deliberate acts, v. g., going to places or into company in which one knows, or should know, from experience, that temptations will arise. In such cases, the thought itself *of going* is a temptation which should be resisted, unless there be some *urgent and legitimate* reason for going.

It is of such temptations as these that St. James speaks when he says: "Let no man when he is tempted say that he is tempted by God. For God is *not* a tempter of evil things, and He tempteth no man. But every man is tempted *by his own concupiscence,* being drawn away and allured. Then when concupiscence hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin. But sin, when it is completed, begetteth *death*" (James i. 13-15).

St. Paul bids us, or exhorts us, *not* to let *this kind* of temptation "take hold on us."

Tells us it will be our fault if we do. For "God is faithful, who

will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will make also with temptation issue that you may be able to bear it."

Conclusion.—Insist on the fact that *temptation* is *not sin.* Proof from the temptations of Our Lord in the desert (Matt. iv. 1-11).

A word of helpful encouragement to those who are inclined to err on this point.

On the other hand, all temptations must be banished or resisted, whether they be against the sixth commandment or to anger, envy, revenge or injustice; for they all proceed from *concupiscence,* in one form or another.

Must be resisted by prayer, i. e., by recourse to the help of God's grace—not relying on our own strength, nor dallying with the temptation, for "he that loveth danger shall perish in it" (Ecclus. iii. 27).

"Wherefore he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall."

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

Man's Dependence Upon the Free Gifts of God.

"No man speaking by the spirit of God, saith anathema to Jesus. And no man can say: the Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost."—I. Cor. xii. 3.

Exordium.—The untiring zeal of the Great Apostle, his thorough consistency and his irresistible logic in preaching the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, should be for us a subject of ever-increasing admiration.

"Jesus Christ yesterday, and to-day, and the same forever" (Heb. xiii. 8). "Unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness. But unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (I. Cor. i. 23, 24).

He has preached *faith* in Christ as the absolute condition of salvation. Without it the works of the law are fruitless. "But without the law . . . the justice of God is made manifest . . . *by faith of Jesus Christ* unto all, and upon all them that believe in him" (Rom. iii. 20-23).

But this faith in Christ is not a matter of mere human opinion or human choice. As if each one, according to his caprice, should say: "I indeed am of Paul; and I am of Apollo; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ" (I. Cor. i. 12).

Our Lord Himself has told us that we can not be *of Him,* i. e., can not *come to Him, "unless the Father draw us"* (John vi. 44).

St. Paul tells us the same to-day.

In a few words he places clearly before us *three facts* well worthy of our consideration:

I. The degrading influence of heathenism. II. The reason of the

bitterness of the Jews toward Our Lord. III. Our dependence upon God not only for our faith in our blessed Saviour, but for all our other gifts, whether of the *natural* or of the *supernatural* order.

I. Reminds His Gentile converts that when they were heathens they yielded themselves to an irrational servitude: "You went to *dumb idols* according as *you were led.*"

Exercised no intelligence on their own part.

Went and *worshipped, paid homage,* not even to *brute beasts* or any other *living thing,* as some other idolatrous nations, but to *mute, inanimate stones,* which had not even *the sense of feeling,* much less *intelligence, speech* or *strength,* and *power* of *motion.*

What good or what help could they (the Corinthians) expect from such gods—mere bits of earth and stone, that had received their very shape from those who foolishly worshipped them? How far more ennobling the worship of Jesus Christ, the Man-God, who had died for them, who had raised Himself up from the dead, and who could and would raise them up to *eternal life* and to indescribable happiness!

This said to prevent them from being led back again to their former heathenish practices. For they were sorely pressed and urged to do so by the unconverted pagans, who were far more numerous than the converts.

II. The Jews, too, were making even more strenuous efforts to draw back those who had left their own ranks (cf. Fouard, St. Paul, vol. i, 255).

The apostle explains in one word the cause of their bitterness: They had not *the spirit of God.* Otherwise it would be impossible for them to reject and revile Our Lord.

For "no man speaking *by the spirit of God,* saith anathema to Jesus."

But no man without the aid of the Holy Ghost could pronounce that holy name *with reverence*—in *a spirit of faith.*

The Jews had forfeited that grace when they rejected Him before Pilate and called down the terrible *anathema* upon their own heads: "His blood be upon us and upon our children" (Matt. xxvii. 25).

Not only had they rejected Our Lord and crucified Him: They had rejected the testimony of the apostles—witnesses to His resurrection. They had hardened their hearts against the graces of Pentecost.

They had reviled and calumniated St. Paul (Fouard, Ibid.).

They had not received the Holy Ghost; and consequently *could not say,* "the Lord Jesus."

III. We, too, are dependent upon the Holy Ghost for the gift of *faith* in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostles themselves had not sufficient *faith* in His Divinity, even at *the* end of His mission. He was obliged to tell them at *the Last Supper,* "When the Paraclete cometh . . . he will give testimony of me" (John xv. 26).

It was not till after the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, had come upon them that they dared go forth and preach fearlessly the *divinity* of the risen Jesus (Cf. Acts ii. 22-36; iii. 12-26).

We would not, and could not, have the faith in Our Lord which we now possess had it not been infused into our souls by the Holy Ghost.

There are to-day, and have been in past ages, many men, certainly more learned, more intelligent and *perhaps* not less sincere than we, and who have carefully studied the life, words and deeds of our blessed Lord, yet lacking the aid of the Holy Ghost, the gift of faith—they could not discover or recognize *His divinity;* they could not say, "the Lord Jesus."

Without hesitation they analyze His character, read His motives, benignantly appreciate His actions, and compare Him with *other* wise and good *men*—philosophers and philanthropists.

An example in point, written by a person of extensive reading and of high moral character: In concluding an unstinted eulogy of Our Lord as the *teacher* of "the new law" and of the "word," "for which the world had waited and pined so long," he says: "Every Knight of the Rose Croix will revere the memory of *Him,* and will *look indulgently* on those who assign to Him a character *far above* His *own conceptions or belief*—even to the extent of *deeming Him divine"* (Morals and Dogma of Freemasonry, by Albert Pike, p. 310).

Strange as it may seem, no man can come nearer to a true appreciation of Our Lord "but *by the Holy Ghost."*

Another important truth: There are many graces, or supernatural gifts, bestowed upon men—some upon one; others upon another.

All bestowed freely, by the same Spirit.

All are given "unto profit."

Most of those enumerated by St. Paul seem to be of an extraordinary kind. But what he says of them is equally true of the ordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, that are indispensable for the formation and development of the *Christian life:* They are not given *in the same measure* to each one, but according as God sees fit—and in proportion to the fidelity shown in the use of them (cf. Parable of the Pounds, Luke xix. 16-24).

Some appear to receive in a special measure the gift of wisdom and prudence in things pertaining to their various Christian duties and obligations; others, the gift of simple but strong and unwavering faith; others, the gift of zeal and broad sympathies; others

again, the gift of modest, unpretentious and almost inexhaustible charity.

" But all these things the same spirit worketh, dividing to every one according as he will."

Conclusion.—From what has been said about the pagans, the Jews and unbelievers, the necessity and the value of the gift of faith, or the light of the Holy Ghost, are evident.

The same may be shown of all the other *free* gifts of God.

Since they *are free,* and are given by God according to His wisdom, there should be no such thing as envy or jealousy among Christians.

Each should give glory to God for all the good he sees in his neighbor.

All should be mindful of their absolute dependence upon " the Giver of all good gifts."

Remembering that no man can even so much as say, " The Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost."

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

Firm Adhesion to the Teachings of the Gospel.

"Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a Gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema."—Gal. i. 8.

Exordium.—St. Paul, intent upon his arduous task of preserving his "sheep" from the "ravening wolves" that were constantly attacking his fold, reminds his dearly beloved flock of the Gospel which he had preached—"which also," he tells them, "you have received, and wherein you stand: by which also you are saved, *if you hold fast* after what manner I preached unto you—unless you have believed *in vain.*"

The Gospel which he preached was none other than that of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

He had received it not only from some of the other apostles, but from Our Lord Himself, who "had died for our sins, according to the Scriptures," and of whose resurrection there were incontestable proofs and even living witnesses.

This *fact* of the *Resurrection* is for the great apostle the very groundwork of his preaching and of our faith: "If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (I. Cor. xv. 14).

Hence in writing to the Galatians, who were exposed to the same danger as the Corinthians, he says to them, in the words of the text: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a Gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema."

I. The Gospel preached by St. Paul is still the only one which we should receive and obey.

It is the Gospel which Our Lord *commanded* His apostles to preach: "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations; . . . teaching them *to observe all things* whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20).

Not only the command *to preach,* but also the command to *hear, observe, obey:*

"Whosoever shall not receive you, *nor hear your words,* going forth out of that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Amen, I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha, in the day of judgment, than for that city" (Matt. x. 14, 15).

"He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me" (Luke x. 16).

Our Lord compares those who hear His words, *and do them,* to a wise man building his house solidly on a rock, so that it will withstand the floods and storms; but those who hear and *do not,* He compares to a foolish man building his house upon sand, thus exposing it to inevitable destruction (Matt. vii. 24-27).

The apostles were faithful to the divine command. So have their successors been ever since, meriting to have the words of the Psalm applied to them, as St. Paul applied them to the prophets of old: "Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth; and their words unto the ends of the whole world" (Ps. xviii. 5; Rom. x. 18).

"The truth of the Lord remaineth forever" (Ps. cxvi. 2).

"Heaven and earth shall pass, but my words shall not pass" (Matt. xxiv. 35).

II. As in the days of St. Paul, so now there is opposition to the teachings of the Gospel.

1. There are "blind, and leaders of the blind" (Matt. xv. 14).

Our Lord tells us the result of their leadership (Ibid.).

2. There are those who "enter *not* by the door, but climb up by another way."

Our Lord tells us who they are (John x. 2) and what they do (Ibid. 12, 13).

3. There are those who claim to be *neutral, indifferent* to the Gospel and its teachings—even to Our Lord Himself.

But He reckons these, too, among His adversaries: "He that is not *with* me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth" (Luke xi. 23).

4. There are those who neither oppose the Gospel nor attempt to teach or interpret it, but who claim to have *a higher* Gospel of their own. They are broader than any *Creed;* acknowledge no *teaching authority;* though Our Lord unquestionably established one (Texts from Matt. and Luke, ut supra).

Such is notably the case with many *social* and *philanthropic* theories and organizations.

While professing, with more or less *sincerity,* to hold up lofty ideals, they in reality draw men away from the only means whereby they may hope to realize those ideals. They reject authoritative teaching, all Sacraments and other supernatural aids, mercifully offered by Almighty God. They teach at best mere *natural virtue,* by which man can never attain to the end for which he was created. Hence they are most reasonably condemned or disapproved by the Church. They usurp the teaching office explicitly confided by Our Lord to His apostles and their successors, and in their misguided zeal lead many souls astray.

This is a point that can not be insisted upon too strongly. Many instances of Catholics remaining away from the Sacraments on

account of their connection with societies in which they see nothing wrong, but, on the contrary, imagine they find what is *good enough for them*—and *easier,* of course, than what the Church requires of them.

III. As in the days of St. Paul, so now there is but one reasonable thing to do, "By which also you are saved: If you *hold fast* after what manner *it has been* preached unto you." Otherwise, "you *have believed in vain.*" "Hold fast" to the teachings of the Gospel —to the doctrine taught by the apostles, and which has been preserved in all its purity under the ever-watchful guardianship of our Holy Mother Church.

That doctrine has the divine sanction of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

It has stood the test by which one of the wisest of the Jews, in the very days of Our Lord and His apostles, wished that it should be tried: "Refrain from these men, and let them alone. For if this counsel or *this work* be of men, it will come to naught. But if it be of God, you can not overthrow it" (Acts v. 38, 39).

Triumphs of this Gospel teaching: It has conquered and civilized the world. Has ennobled mankind. It has given to man *a moral law* incomparably superior to anything that has ever been devised by human intelligence.

Not only has it proclaimed the law, but it has brought men *to accept it,* and *to live up to it.*

Will seek in vain for anything deserving of comparison with it in the whole range of mere human attempt at the betterment of man.

Its fruits are evident. Its advantages, its moral support and its consolations are known to all those who have bowed their necks to its gentle yoke.

Conclusion.—Earnest exhortation to all to take to heart the lesson of the day: Deep and docile respect for the teachings of the Gospel.

Intelligent appreciation of the many ways in which that teaching is daily opposed, and often frustrated. Call especial attention to the more covert attacks, by so-called *non-sectarian,* or *super-sectarian* organizations, non-religious or anti-religious literature, and *immoral social influences.*

Firm adhesion, regardless of jibes, jeers, high-sounding words, or the opposition of our lower inclinations—in spite of all these obstacles. Firm adhesion to the Gospel teachings: "*Hold fast* after what manner *it has been* preached unto you."

"Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a Gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema."

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

The New Law and its Priesthood.

"Our sufficiency is from God, who also hath made us fit ministers of the New Testament."—II. Cor. iii. 5, 6.

Exordium.—In to-day's epistle St. Paul insists upon three things: I. That the New Law, which is *a continuation,* rather than *an abrogation* of the Old, is far superior to it. II. That the ministry, i. e., *the priesthood* of the New Law, is correspondingly higher—more helpful to those for whom it is exercised. III. That the ministers of the New Law claim no credit for themselves; for "*their* sufficiency is from God."

I. The Old Law was a law *of fear.*

The whole history of the Jews, from Sinai to the Babylonian captivity, proves this.

It was necessary that it should be so; first, to wean the chosen people of God from the degrading influences of idolatry under which they had been during their more than four hundred years of bondage, and to which they were afterward exposed by contact with heathen nations; secondly, in order to curb their blind and foolish presumption upon the special favors of God—also clearly shown in the Sacred Narrative.

St. Paul calls the law given from the heights of Sinai, and afterward developed in detail during the wanderings, "the ministration *of death";* because the violation of its precepts was frequently punished with death—by plague, pestilence and the sword, and even by the direct manifestation of the anger of Jehovah.

That it was "engraven with letters *upon stones*" was typical of its inflexible severity.

It was, indeed, so glorious, with the power and majesty of God, from whom it emanated, "that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look upon the face of Moses," through whom it was delivered unto them, "for the glory of his countenance."

Yet all this was in due time to be "made void." The law came to its end, and the glory thereof departed forever when the veil of the Temple was rent.

But it had served the all-wise purpose of HIM who gave it; it had brought the Jews to a knowledge of the ONE GOD: "In Judea God is known: His name is great in Israel" (Ps. lxxv. 2).

It took a long time to bring them even to this knowledge, *because* "their senses were made dull," says St. Paul; and "even unto this day," he continues, "when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. But when they shall be converted the veil shall be taken away. But we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord" (II. Cor. iii. 14-18).

The law *of fear* and *of death* was succeeded by the law *of love* and *of life:* "God so *loved* the world as to give his only begotten Son: that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have *life* everlasting" (John iii. 16). "By this hath the *charity* of God appeared toward us, because God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we may *live* by him" (I. John iv. 9).

The whole life and teaching of Our Lord was *love, kindness, compassion, mercy, forgiveness.*

"Now the Lord is a spirit. And where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (II. Cor. iii. 17).

"How, *therefore,* shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather

in glory? For if the ministration of *condemnation* be glory, much more the ministration of *justice* aboundeth in glory." ["The ministration of *justice,*" i. e., the ministration of the New Law, which can bring men to *justice,* or *justification.* Sic à Lapide, in loco.]

II. The ministers who are to preach and administer this *New* and more glorious *law* are chosen by Our Lord Himself, the author of the law: "You have not chosen me; but I have chosen you, that you should go and bring forth fruit; and your fruit should remain" (John xv. 16).

"As the Father hath sent me, I also send you" (Ibid. xx. 21).

"Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye, therefore, wise as serpents and simple as doves. But *beware of men* (i. e., of those who are enemies of *me* and of my Gospel). For they will deliver you up in their councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. But . . . take no thought how or what to speak. For it will be given you in that hour what to speak. For it is not you that speak, but *the spirit of your Father* that speaketh in you" (Matt. x. 16-20).

Sent forth with a divine commission, with the promise of divine aid, and with admonition to be prudent, gentle, straightforward, patient, courageous.

Sent forth as "ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God" (I. Cor. iv. 1). To "offer gifts and sacrifices for sins" (Heb. v. 1). To offer up the adorable sacrifice of Calvary, as it had been predicted by the prophet: "From the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles; and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name *a clean oblation*" (Mal. i. 11).

At every moment of the twenty-four hours of the day the sweet sound of the consecration bell is heard in some part of the world.

The "ministers of Christ" are also sent forth to break the shackles of sin: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them" (John xx. 22, 23).

Sent forth to visit and succor the poor, the unfortunate, the abandoned and the outcast; the sick, the dying and the plague-stricken.

In all this, the ministry of the New Law differs essentially and widely from that of the Old.

The difference strikingly shown by Our Lord in the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke x. 30-37; cf. à Lapide, in vers. 35).

III. Great as is the ministry of the priest of the New Law, he can claim no credit for himself, for "his sufficiency is from God."

God calls him to his work: "Neither doth any man take the honor to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was" (Heb. v. 4).

Yet this *divine call* does not suppose or imply any special exemption from the weaknesses of human nature.

St. Paul explicitly states the contrary. Every priest, he says, is a man "who can have compassion on them that are ignorant and that err; *because* he himself is also compassed with infirmity" (Ibid. v. 2).

Neither does the priest of the New Law lay claim by nature or birth to any superiority in wisdom, intelligence, or even in worldly learning.

It was not for any of these gifts or qualities that the first apostles were chosen. "But the foolish things of the world hath God chosen that he may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen that he may confound the strong. And the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen, and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought

the things that are. That no flesh should glory in his sight" (I. Cor. i. 27-29; cf. à Lapide, in loco).

Conclusion.—What St. Paul has told us of the *ministry,* the *vocation* and *personality* of the priest of the New Law has been true in all ages of the Church.

As true to-day as when he taught it to the first Christians. The ministry sublime. The vocation from God; by virtue of this divine vocation and the grace of God weak men, taken from the ordinary ranks of humanity, are made "fit ministers of the New Testament" —"ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God."

Exhortation to the people to pray earnestly to our divine Saviour, the Supreme Pastor, to continue to bless those whom He sends forth in His name, that "they may bring forth fruit, and their fruit may remain."

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

The Old Law and the Promise.

"To Abraham were the promises made, and to his seed, . . . which is Christ."—Gal. iii. 16.

Exordium.—We who are born to the rich and glorious inheritance of Christian Faith seldom, if ever, fully realize the arduous labors (albeit crowned with miraculous success) of those "who planted that faith in their own blood."

One of the greatest difficulties in the beginning was to make the Jews, and even the converts to Christianity, understand the *relation* and the *difference* between the Old Testament, and the New left us by our divine Saviour. Between the *promise* contained in the former, and its *fulfillment* in the person of Our Lord, and recorded in the New Testament, as later given by the evangelists and other inspired writers.

In fact, the Jews of the time of Our Lord and of the apostles seemed to confound the Levitical Law with the entire Old Testament, of which it was a very small portion.

In to-day's epistle St. Paul exposes this error.

I. The promise made to Abraham referred to Christ, and was fulfilled in Him, and in those who believed in Him, both before and after His coming. II. The law, in which the Jews put their entire trust, had nothing to do with the promise; neither was it in contradiction with it. III. The law had, indeed, a special object:

but *justification* could not be attained by the observance of the law, unless accompanied by *faith in Christ.*

I. "To Abraham were the promises made, and to his *seed.* He saith not, and to his *seeds,* as of many, but as of *one,* and to thy *seed,* which is Christ." Though Abraham in the beginning did not fully understand the designs of God (cf. Sketch for Fourth Sunday of Lent), nevertheless "he believed God, and it was reputed to him unto justice" (Gen. xv. 6).

Eventually he understood them sufficiently, as we learn from the testimony of Our Lord Himself: "Abraham, your father rejoiced that he might see my day; he saw it, and was glad" (John viii. 56; cf. à Lapide, in loco).

The belief that the promise referred to the *Messias,* the *Christ,* the *Emanuel,* was common among the Jews, and the ardent longing for the day of His coming became more intense as time rolled on.

The Church reminds us of this in her beautiful Advent Office, repeating daily the words of the prophet: "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain *the* JUST. Let the earth be opened and bud forth a SAVIOUR" (Isa. xlv. 8). This belief is also shown by St. Paul's tribute to "the ancients," who, *by faith in the promise,* and *not by the works of the law,* "obtained a testimony," i. e., attained to justification through Christ. Speaking of those, from "Abel the just" to Abraham and Sarah, "all these," he says, "died according to faith, not having received the promises, but beholding them afar off and saluting them."

Continuing his enumeration from Isaac to Moses, and from Moses to David and Samuel, and to the other prophets and holy persons down to the eve of the coming of Christ, he adds, "And all these being approved *by the testimony of faith,* received not the promise; God providing some better thing for us, that *they* should

not be *perfected without us*" (Heb. xi.). That is, they should not enter into eternal happiness until *after* the coming of Christ, the promised Messias (sic à Lapide, in vers. 40, cap. xi.).

II. The law, therefore, had nothing to do with the promise, since both those who lived *before* the law and those who lived after it had been given "obtained a testimony"—by faith in the promise made to the *seed* of Abraham, "which is Christ."

But neither "was the law *against* the promises of God." It was simply a provision made by the wisdom of God—a means to an end.

But that end was not *justice,* or the immediate attainment of *reconciliation with God:* "For if there had been a law given which could *give life,* verily *justice* should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath *concluded all under sin.*" That is, the Scripture has proved all men to be sinners—cut off from the favor and friendship of God.

They had need, therefore, of *His grace,* which was not given *through the law,* but through *the promise, by faith in Jesus Christ.*

III. What, then, was the use or object of the law?

"It was set *because* of *transgressions,* until the *seed* should come to whom God had made the promise."

"All flesh had corrupted its way" (Gen. vi. 12).

The Jewish people, especially after long sojourn in the midst of Egyptian idolatry, were not an exception.

God knew the hardness of their heart and the weakness and fickleness of their will. He knew that their "transgressions" would be numerous, and would render them more and more unworthy to inherit the promise. It was necessary to "rule them with a rod of iron" (Ps. ii. 9).

The law, therefore, with its numerous and often severe enactments, was given *to educate* them; to inspire them with a horror

of *transgression* and a dread of its punishment, and a profound fear and reverence of God the Omnipotent and Omnipresent.

The salutary effect of these severe regulations is one of the most conspicuous facts of history.

In spite of their many faults, the Jews were, at the coming of Our Lord, morally superior to all the other nations of the world. None other had so true an idea of the ONE GOD. None other had a religion as pure and elevating as theirs when practised in conformity with their law. Their fatal error was precisely the one upon which St. Paul insists and which was condemned by Our Lord Himself: Adhering too strictly to the *letter* of the law they ignored its *spirit,* misunderstood the promise, lost the true idea of the Messias, and failed to recognize Him when He came. "O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken," said Our Lord to the two disciples, on the day of His resurrection.

"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things that were concerning him" (Luke xxiv. 25-27).

Conclusion.—Resume the lessons taught by St. Paul.

Salvation was through the promise, not through or by the law.

The promise was given and repeated many centuries before the law, but was not to be fulfilled until after the law had run its destined course.

The law was given to prepare the Jewish people for the coming of the Messias.

The promise was given for all—Jew and Gentile, bond and free—who should *believe in Christ* and "do the will of his Father in heaven" (Matt. vii. 21).

These are the seed that were to be multiplied "as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is by the seashore" (Gen. xxii. 17).

The lesson is instructive; but it is also consoling to know that we, too, are children of Abraham by faith, and heirs of the promise: "For as many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ. And if you be Christ's, then are you the seed of Abraham, heirs according to the promise" (Gal. iii. 27, 29).

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

The Fruits of the Holy Ghost.*

"The fruit of the spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity."—Gal. v. 22, 23.

Exordium.—The lesson of to-day's epistle is simple and practical.

It contains first an enumeration of the principal vices which are daily working havoc in the world.

St. Paul calls them "the works of the flesh," and says they are "manifest"—and we know that they are.

Some of them, sins of sensuality, sap the life, moral and physical, of the young, and also carry the curse of the serpent into the Eden of *the home.*

Drunkenness, revelings and murders daily offer a holocaust of victims to *the enemy* of God and man.

Other sins, such as anger, hatred, jealousy, quarrels and strife, constantly mar, or completely destroy, the effect of God's grace, the work of the Holy Ghost, in the soul.

Of all these "works of the flesh" the apostle says: "I foretell you, as I have foretold to you, that they who do these things *shall not enter the kingdom of God.*"

The remedy: "Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." Allow the Holy Spirit to produce His fruits in the soul, and there will be no place or room in it for the vices and concupiscences of the flesh.

* Cf. "Internal Mission of the Holy Ghost," Manning, chapters vii.-xv.

Explain (I.) how God prepares the soul for the operation of the Holy Ghost; (II.) how *the fruits* of the Holy Ghost are produced in the soul; (III.) the *nature* of these fruits and their essential opposition to "the works of the flesh."

I. God *infuses* or *pours into* each soul, in Baptism the three great virtues, *faith, hope* and *charity,* or *love.*

They are *supernatural* gifts, to which no human being has any right or claim, and which could never possibly be acquired by any effort of human reason and intelligence.

They are, as it were, the *faculties* or *powers* of the soul that is "born again of water and the Holy Ghost" (Internal Mission, xv., 308).

Faith enlightens the human intellect, and enables it to know God and *to believe* in Him and in all that He has revealed.

Hope and *charity* give the soul *confidence* in its ultimately attaining to God, its *sovereign good,* and an ardent *desire* to possess Him; consequently a *love of Him* above all other things (Manning, iii. iv., v.).

These *supernatural powers* of the soul are, or should be, developed along with the *natural faculties,* reason, will and desire, or love. That is, the child, as its *natural* faculties are developed, should be made to know that it has these *supernatural* virtues and taught to practise them—the duty of parents and teachers.

God does more than this for the soul: Through Our Lord Jesus Christ it receives—also *by infusion*—the *seven gifts* of the Holy Ghost: Wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and the fear of the Lord (cf. Manning, vii.-xiv.). These have been called "the steps of a ladder, of which the lowest is *fear.* Beginning there, we ascend to the highest, which is *wisdom*" (Gaume Catech. Persev., ii., 229). Or, again: "These seven gifts are seven powers,

or seven springs of action, whereby faith, hope and charity are called into *activity,* and directed in their action" (Manning, vii., 136).

Such, then, is God's work of preparing the soul to bring forth "the fruits of the spirit."

II. The virtues and the gifts just spoken of have been *poured into* the soul without *merit* or *co-operation* on its part. Not so with "the *fruits* of the spirit." Co-operation is absolutely necessary in order to produce them.

As a child may be endowed with extraordinary talents, even amounting to *genius,* and yet, through sheer indolence, lack of ambition or downright perversity, may remain ignorant and worthless all his life: so the soul, through slothfulness, effeminacy or perversity of will, may prevent the gifts of the Holy Ghost from ever bearing fruit. Great obligation, therefore, of bringing forth "the fruits of the spirit" (Manning, xv., 309).

No excuse: The bringing forth of *the fruits* does not depend upon *talent* and *learning,* but upon *good-will.* "Piety and the fear of the Lord" are sufficient to insure the rest. The most simple and illiterate person is as capable of bringing forth these fruits as the most intelligent and most learned.

Such the admirable wisdom, justice and mercy of God! He makes salvation equally possible for all.

III. "The fruits of the spirit" enumerated by St. Paul are a perfect offset to the vices against which he warns us.

They may be divided into three classes (Manning, xv., 310).

First. Charity, joy and peace refer to the relation of the soul with God Himself; *charity,* or *love,* which unites us with Him; the *joy* of a good conscience; and the *peace* and tranquillity proceeding therefrom.

Secondly. Other of these fruits refer to our relations with our

neighbor. *Patience,* in bearing with the defects of others and with the trials and disappointments of life.

Benignity and *goodness:* kindness of manner, generosity in rendering service to others.

Longanimity, another form of patience, is "an unwearied *perseverance* in doing good," whenever or wherever the occasion may present itself. *Mildness* is opposed to anger, irritability and resentment.

The *faith* here spoken of means *fidelity* and *veracity* in promises, obligations and contracts; fairness and honesty in all our dealings with our fellow men.

No virtue more highly and universally esteemed and respected. Where it is wanting it is exceedingly difficult to give due credit for any other virtues that a man may seem to possess.

Lastly. Modesty, by which is meant *moderation* and *propriety* in all our exterior actions: Avoiding haughtiness and vain pretension, roughness and vulgarity in manner, dress or speech.

Continency means *self-control,* the repressing of *all* passions and inordinate impulses or appetites. "Continency," says St. Anselm, "is the struggle to preserve purity of soul; while *chastity* is the possession of that purity in peace."

Conclusion.—Insist upon the importance, and at the same time the reasonableness, of this lesson. Nothing in it that may not be understood and put in practice by all. Nothing in it that is not worthy of the serious attention and meditation of the most intelligent and learned.

Much of it has been taught to children in Catechism.

Insist upon the importance of not forgetting these things in after life. Importance also of heeding the lesson of the day: "Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

Danger of Self-Deception in Regard to Eternal Life.

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap."—Gal. vi. 7, 8.

Exordium.—In to-day's epistle St. Paul again exhorts us to "walk in the spirit," i. e., to be faithful in corresponding to the graces and inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

He warns us against the danger of deceiving ourselves, and points out some of the ways in which we may do it.

God wills the salvation of all—even the wicked: "As I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked be converted from his way, and live" (Ezech. xxxiii. 11). "The grace of God, *our Saviour,* hath appeared *to all men*" (Tit. ii. 11). "Christ died *for all*" (II. Cor. v. 15). "Jesus Christ the Just is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but for those of *the whole world*" (I. John ii. 2).

On the other hand, all men desire *life* and *happiness.*

All who believe in God and in *a future life,* desire to be *happy* in that life—desire *salvation.*

If, therefore, any fail to attain to salvation—to eternal life—it is not because God does not will it, but because they will have *deceived themselves.*

The apostle tells us: I. The various ways in which we may deceive ourselves. II. What the consequence will be. III. What we should do in order to "reap life everlasting."

I. 1. We deceive ourselves by *vain-glory:* Imagining that we

possess certain qualities which we really do not possess, or that we possess them in a higher degree than our neighbors do, and glorying in them as though we had *acquired* them by our own efforts and intelligence.

One has as much reason to indulge in this vain imagination as another. In fact, *very many* do. Hence rivalry, envy, jealousy, detraction, etc.

The apostle condemns severely both the imagination and the self-glorification: "If any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."

"What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" (I. Cor. iv. 7).

2. We deceive ourselves by failing to do the good that comes in our way—failing to do it by either word or deed: "Brethren, if any man be overtaken in any fault, you who are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, *considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*"

"*Instruct such a one.*" Many interpreters maintain, and apparently with good reason, that the word *instruct* does not here mean to *lecture, catechize* or *reprove*—even in *a fatherly way;* but it means *to lift up, to restore.*

The opportunity to do this is very often neglected. It may be done in one or another of three ways: By speaking directly to the person, if circumstances will permit; or urging others to do so who have more influence; or by taking means to remove the person from dangerous surroundings and occasions of sin or temptation.

There are many ways and opportunities of reclaiming a person who is *about to go wrong,* or who *has gone wrong,* without ever alluding to his fault.

This is a work which God *expects* of those who have the means or opportunity of doing it—and *all have,* at one time, and in one way or another: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfill *the law of Christ,*" viz.: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. xxii. 39).

3. Of course, those deceive themselves who through either malice or frivolity follow their natural impulses or yield to the seductions of vice, regardless of the commandments of God.

Lastly, those also deceive themselves who, even with a certain moderation and worldly prudence, live *only for the world.* They pay their tribute to Cæsar, but refuse or neglect to "render to God the things that are God's."

II. The consequences of this self-deception:

"God is not mocked," i. e., He is not deceived *now,* nor will He be defrauded of His rights when the day of reckoning comes. Then will all men find that there is "no king but God."

God, the ETERNAL KING, can bide His time; with Him there is neither *past* nor *future;* all is an *eternal present.* Man may sow as he likes, *but* "what things a man shall sow those also shall he reap." If he sow the seed of vain-glory and self-conceit, he shall reap the empty bubble of *nothingness,* together with the oft-repeated condemnation of *pride, arrogance.* "Where pride is, there also shall be reproach" (Ps. xi. 2). "The Lord shall destroy the house of the proud" (Ps. xv. 25). "Pride is hateful before God and men. The beginning of the pride of man is to fall off from God" (Ecclus. x. 7, 14).

"Thy arrogancy hath deceived thee, and thy pride of heart, O thou that dwellest in the cliffs of the rock: But though thou shouldst make thy nest as high as an eagle, I will bring thee down, saith the Lord" (Jer. xlix. 16). "Every one that exalteth himself shall be

humbled" (Luke xiv. 11). "The base things of the world and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen, and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are: That no flesh might glory in his sight" (I. Cor. i. 28, 29).

If man sow the seed of selfishness and hard-heartedness, he will reap isolation and abandonment; will stand *alone* before the judgment of God. He will have failed to "make unto himself friends of the mammon of iniquity" (Luke xvi. 9).

The prayers of the poor, the widow, the orphan and the outcast will not be there to plead for him. "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it not to one of these *least,* neither did you do it to me. And these shall go into everlasting punishment" (Matt. xxv. 45, 46).

"He that soweth in the flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption." "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. vi. 23).

He that trusteth in the riches and comforts of this world shall suddenly be called away, carrying no more than he brought with him. "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee: and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" (Luke xii. 20).

III. "He that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting."

What is to be done? Some things are to be *done;* others to be *avoided.* The apostle has indicated both clearly enough: Avoid vainglory, self-conceit, hard-heartedness, selfishness.

As man can not live without the society and services of his fellow men, he is a debtor *to his race,* to all the members of it, according to his means and circumstances. Any one who fails to realize this obligation deceives himself *fatally.* Not an obligation for *the rich alone* (though their *stewardship* is the more responsible in proportion to their wealth), but *for every one.*

Kindness and charity to the weak and the erring and unfortunate, to the poor and the ignorant: "In doing good let us not fail; for in due time we shall reap, not failing. Therefore, whilst we have time, let us work good to all men, but *especially* to those who are of the household of the faith."

No unchristian clannishness and unjust discrimination against those who are not of the faith. But avoidance of unseemly and scandalous dissensions.

Conclusion.—Remember the warning: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap."

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

Simple Faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

"I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and him crucified."—I. Cor. ii. 2.

Exordium.—There is nothing in all the writings of St. Paul so clear, evident and oft-repeated as his simple, boundless *faith* in Our Lord Jesus Christ and his ardent, all-consuming *love* for his divine Master: "Jesus Christ yesterday and to-day, and the same forever" (Heb. xiii. 8).

At every step of his fearless, whole-souled and victorious battle for the establishment of the kingdom of Christ upon earth he was confronted by three different classes of opponents. *First.* What we may call Jews *of the strict observance,* who, while blindly adhering to the letter of the law, had "delivered up and denied the Holy One and the Just," when even the pagan Pilate "judged he should be released" (Acts iii. 13, 14). *Secondly. Time-serving Jews,* who, with modern *broad-mindedness,* had become imbued with Grecian and Oriental ideas of physical culture, false philosophy and idolatrous or superstitious practices. *Lastly.* Pagan or Gentile *savants* of Egypt and Chaldea, who knew nothing of the law of Moses or the God of Israel, but had learned theories of their own, and could set them forth in brilliant, fascinating language. The fascination of falsehood is always in due proportion to its obscurity (cf. Fouard, St. Peter, ch. iii.; Gigot, "Outlines of Jewish History," p. 369; Kenrick, "Preface to Ephesians").

To all these St. Paul opposes his strong but unpretentious avowal: "Brethren, when I came to you, I came *not* in loftiness of speech

or of wisdom, *but simply* declaring unto you *the testimony of Christ.* For I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I. Cor. ii. 1, 2). "My speech and my preaching was *not* in the persuasive words of human wisdom, *but* in the shewing of *the spirit and power;* that your *faith* might *not* stand on the wisdom of men, *but on the power of God"* (Ibid. 4, 5).

Hence in the epistle of to-day the apostle, as it were, on bended knee, prays for two things: I. "That Christ may dwell in our hearts *by faith."* II. "That we may know *the charity of Christ,* which surpasseth all knowledge."

I. Our faith in Christ should be *simple,* i. e., *unquestioning, prompt, unfaltering, unlimited.*

We should believe, and have this belief constantly before our minds, that Christ was *not merely a man,* a *prophet,* a *great teacher,* a *reformer,* a *philanthropist.*

The disgusting and pitiable presumption of those who think they *generously* and *benevolently honor* Our Lord by according Him these titles, and placing Him in the first rank as *a moral teacher* and a *lover of* His *fellow* men.

Our faith in Him teaches us that He is truly *the Son* of *God,* equal and co-eternal with the Father.

We believe, with St. John, that, "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word *was God";* that "all things were made *by him;* and *without him* was made nothing that was made"; and that "in him was *life,* and the life was *the light of men."* Finally, we believe that this divine "WORD was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John i. 1-5, 14).

We believe, with St. Paul, that "Christ is *before all;* and by him all things consist" (Col. i. 17).

We believe with simple, unquestioning faith Our Lord's own

testimony of Himself: "All things are delivered to me by my Father. And no one knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither doth any one know the Father, but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal *him*" (Matt. xi. 27).

In a word, we believe that JESUS CHRIST *is* GOD—"yesterday, to-day, and the same forever."

It is thus that St. Paul would have Christ "dwell in our hearts by faith."

II. He prays "that we may know *the charity of Christ* (i. e., His love *for us*), which surpasseth all knowledge."

To "comprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth" of *the divine mystery* (cf. Kenrick, in loco) of Christ's love for us, we must not forget His *oneness with the Father.* "I and the Father are *one*" (John x. 30).

So is their *charity,* or *love* for us, also *one and the same. God the Father* "so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have *life everlasting*" (John iii. 16).

God the Son, obedient to the will of His Father, laid down His life for us (Heb. x. 7).

His love for us greater than the greatest that *man* can offer. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life *for his friends*" (John xv. 13).

Our divine Saviour laid down His life not only *for His friends,* but also *for His enemies.* "For when we were *sinners,* Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 8, 9). Died for those who crucified Him. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34). "The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep" (John x. 11). Not only for the sheep who "follow him, because they know his voice" (Ibid. 4), but also for those who flee from

him and wander far away. "Other sheep I have that are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and there shall be *one fold* and *one shepherd*" (Ibid. 16).

No wonder that language should fail even the eloquent apostle of the Gentiles to describe or explain "what is the breadth and length and height and depth" of the love of Christ for us (cf. Fouard, "Last Days of St. Paul," p. 74).

He could only "bow his knees to the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ," and beseech Him "to grant us, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened *by his spirit,* according to the inward man, that Christ may dwell in our hearts *by faith.*"

It is thus only, i. e., by "being rooted and founded in charity" ourselves, that we may hope to comprehend something of the love of Christ for us.

III. There are still many classes of opponents to the establishment of the kingdom of Christ in the hearts of men. Fully as many as in the days of St. Paul, and more varied in character. Those who have persistently refused to recognize Him as the Messias; those who, following a creed of modern invention, deny the *Triune* nature of God; those who deny all revelation, claiming even that it is impossible for God to *speak* to man; those who claim that God either does not exist, or, if He does, is *unknowable;* and, lastly, those who, without denying or affirming the existence of God, refuse absolutely to pay Him the tribute of *religious worship* in any form. Doubtful, however, whether all these forces combined are as potent in destroying simple faith in Christ as is the *unguided* and *indiscriminate reading* of erroneous and misleading *theories,* daily emanating from the press in every conceivable form.

Eagerness for this kind of reading, especially on the part of those who pride themselves on their *intellectuality,* and seek a higher plane

of thought and broader intellectual horizon than they are able to find in the simple teachings and maxims of the inspired writings. The evil is unquestionably great. To stem its torrent let the authorized teachers of religion and morality take to themselves the words of St. Paul to Timothy: "I charge thee, before God and Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead: *Preach the word:* be instant, in season, and out of season: reprove, entreat, rebuke *in all patience* and *doctrine.* For there shall be a time when they will not endure *sound doctrine;* but according to their own desires, they will heap to themselves teachers, *having itching ears:* And will indeed turn away their hearing *from the truth,* but will be turned *unto fables"* (II. Tim. iv. 1-4).

Earnest exhortation to cherish the precious gift of simple faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ and in His teachings. He is "the way, the truth and the life" (John xiv. 6).

There are, indeed, various branches of knowledge to be pursued by each one according to his tastes, talents and opportunities. But in what pertains to the regulation and guidance of *the moral life,* no Christian can find a safer or a nobler motto than that of St. Paul: "I judge not myself to know anything but Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

Unity of Faith.*

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all."—Eph. iv. 5, 6.

Exordium.—Various meanings of the word *faith.* In a broader sense it means: (1) *Confidence* of one person, or of a number of persons, in another person or persons; *confidence* in the merits or success of an enterprise. (2) *Sincerity,* as when a person is said to be acting *in good faith.* (3) *Loyalty* to one's obligations, agreements and promises.

But as applied to man's relations to God, it has two very special and, we may call them, *primary* meanings: (1) The *supernatural light* which God *gratuitously* infuses into the human mind, whereby it is enabled to come to a knowledge of, and to grasp certain *truths* which would otherwise be utterly beyond the reach of its *unaided natural intelligence,* however strong and bright that intelligence might be in regard to *material things,* or even *intellectual things* within the limited sphere of *mere human knowledge.* (2) It means the *collection of truths* laid hold upon by the human mind, with the aid of this *supernatural light;* truths which express and explain man's relations to God, and what he must do in order to attain to *eternal life.*

In both these senses *faith* must be *one. All men* should see *the same truths* in this *one light,* recognize *the same obligations,* and find *the same way* to the "one God and Father of all."

* See "The Pillar and Ground of the Truth," Rev. Thomas E. Cox, Second Lecture.

I. The very nature of faith implies and requires unity.

II. How unity of faith is preserved *within* the fold of the Catholic Church.

III. How the "other sheep" are to be brought into the *one true fold,* in order that there may be "one fold and one shepherd" (John x. 16).

I. The very nature of faith implies and requires unity:

As a *supernatural light* it comes direct from God, and its object is to lead every one enlightened by it *direct to God.*

The needle of every perfect *compass* points towards *the one* pole star. So every infusion of the *divine light* of faith directs the eye of the mind to *the one God.*

Without the guidance of this *light,* man could no more *reach* God than a child lost in a vast, dense, trackless forest could find its way home; or a man cast adrift in midocean could, *without a compass,* make direct for a given port, even if he had the physical strength and other requisite means.

God will give to no man a false, deceiving *light,* any more than He will give him a *false conscience.* Neither will He give to different men a *light* supposed to be the same but leading *different ways,* and ending in error, contradiction and strife. "A path and a way shall be there, and it shall be called *a holy way:* . . . and this shall be unto you a *straight way,* so that fools shall not err therein" (Isa. xxxv. 8; cf. à Lapide, in loco).

Unity and *harmony* of the truths acquired by the *light* of faith. *Truth is one.* No one *part* of truth can be in contradiction with another part, any more than God, who is sovereign, simple, indivisible Truth, can be *in contradiction with Himself.*

Faith, in the sense of adherence to certain religious tenets, is not

mere opinion; not mere *conviction*, however sincere, acquired by *unaided* human reason or intelligence.

Daily experience shows that men the most honest and most intelligent will hold conflicting *opinions* after a careful examination of *the same question* from the *same data*. In grave matters they will acquire opposite *convictions*, for which each party will lay down his life.

Such has been the case even (and we might say *especially*) in matters of *religion*. Yet "God is *not* the God *of dissension*, but *of peace*" (I. Cor. xiv. 33).

St. Paul severely reproves the folly of the Corinthians in pinning their *faith* to the preaching of their personal favorites, or choosing it for themselves directly from the words of Our Lord: "Every one of you saith: I indeed am of Paul; and I am of Apollo; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ *divided?*" he asks; or "Was Paul crucified for you? or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (I. Cor. i. 12, 13).

He denounces in the severest terms the preaching of conflicting doctrines. *He* preaches what he had received from our Lord Himself (I. Cor. xi. 23) and what it had pleased God *to reveal to him* (Gal. i. 15, 16). Wherefore he says: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema" (Gal. i. 8).

"I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you *all speak the same thing*, and that there be *no schisms* among you" (I. Cor. i. 10).

The same exhortation in to-day's epistle: "*Be* careful to keep the *unity* of the Spirit in the bond of peace: . . . as you are called *in one hope* of your calling. One Lord, *one faith*, one baptism."

II. How *unity of faith* is preserved *within* the fold of the Catholic Church:

She respects the divine commission given to the apostles: "Go ye into the whole world and preach the (*one*) Gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi. 15).

She believes in His promise to be with them "all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20).

She believes in the commission and the power given to St. Peter, and to his lawful successors: "Feed my lambs: Feed my sheep" (John xxi. 16, 17). "I will give to thee the keys to the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven" (Matt. xvi. 19).

She has never failed to teach and enforce obedience to the successor of St. Peter.

She has taught but *one* Gospel to all her children, in all ages, the world over.

She has required all her children to "speak the same things," and to "keep the *unity* of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

She has held them to the doctrine taught by St. Paul: One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God, and Father of all."

III. How the "other sheep" are to be brought into the fold:

It is Our Lord's own work, and He will do it in His own good time. Nevertheless He expects our co-operation.

We must be *with* Him, otherwise we shall be counted as being *against* Him (Luke xi. 23).

St. Paul tells us *how* we are to do our part: "Walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called."

Our faith teaches us sublime truths, sets for us a high and pure

standard of moral conduct, gives us extraordinary aids (in Sacraments and otherwise) for the accomplishment of our duty.

Very many of those outside the fold know what we profess to believe, and they expect us to live up to it. Our first duty, therefore, toward them is to give them the edification of a sincere, consistent Christian life. The evil, the guilt and the responsibility of giving scandal: "Wo to that man by whom the scandal cometh" (Matt. xviii. 7).

"With all humility and mildness." Humble recognition of God's special mercy and favor to us, in calling us to the *true faith.* St. Paul reproved the Jews for glorying in the fact that they were God's chosen people, and for imagining themselves better than the Gentiles.

We have no right to glory over those outside the fold. We should rather ask ourselves what we would probably do were we in their place. Would we make the heroic sacrifices that many of them are daily making *for conscience sake,* i. e., to *follow the light,* when it is vouchsafed to them?

With mildness: Avoiding all bitter controversy, unkind, offensive, and inconsiderate remarks.

Lack of *respectful consideration* for those outside the fold really betrays ignorance and bigotry.

Conclusion.—Try to bring home as forcibly as possible the important lesson of the day: The *necessity* of unity of faith, the blessing of having it as it exists within the Catholic Church, and our duty to help in the accomplishment of Our Lord's desire: That there may be "one fold and one Shepherd." "One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above, and through all, and in us all. Who is blessed for ever and ever. Amen."

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

The Riches of the Grace of God Through Christ Our Lord.

"I give thanks to my God always for you, for the grace of God that is given you in Christ Jesus, that in all things you are made rich in Him."—I. Cor. i. 4, 5.

Exordium.—God gives His grace to men in different *measures.* To all men He gives grace *sufficient* to enable them to attain to *eternal life.*

Proved by numerous texts of Holy Scripture. "I have called, and you have refused. . . . You have despised all my counsel, and have neglected my reprehensions" (Prov. i. 24, 25). "Men of Juda, judge between me and my vineyard. What is there that I ought to do more for my vineyard, and I have not done to it?" (Isa. v. 3, 4). "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, *and thou wouldest not*" (Matt. xxiii. 37).

The Church requires us to believe, as an article of faith, that God thus gives *sufficient* grace to *all* men. "God does not command *impossibilities,* but in commanding, He both admonishes thee to do what thou art able to do, and to pray for what thou art not able to do, and *aids thee,* that thou mayest be able; *whose commandments are not heavy; whose yoke is sweet, and whose burden light*" (Conc. Trid., Sess. VI., Can. xi.).

But while God gives to *all* what is *sufficient,* He gives to *very many* a greater abundance of grace, which becomes *efficacious* for *their salvation,* on condition always of a certain co-operation.

God does this according to His own will and pleasure—out of bounty or mercy to some without injustice to others. "I will have mercy on whom I will, and I will be merciful to whom it shall please me" (Exod. xxxiii. 19).

It is of this *bountiful* dispensation of God's providence that St. Paul speaks in to-day's epistle.

I. "In all things we are made rich in Christ Jesus." His very coming is a revelation of God's *love* for us. "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have *life everlasting*" (John iii. 16).

This mark of God's *love* is also a pledge of His boundless generosity towards us. "He that spared not even his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how hath He not also, with him, given us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32).

Our Lord *came,* "a high priest of the good things to come; . . . entered once into the holy of holies, having obtained *for us* eternal redemption" (Heb. ix. 11, 12).

He came and suffered for us, that "where *sin* abounded, *grace* did more abound" (Rom. v. 20).

He came as "the true light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world," and "as many as received him, he gave to them power to become *the sons of God*" (John i. 9, 12).

He came as the *true Teacher,* to explain the law and the commandments, and to teach us to observe them *in the spirit,* and *not in the letter.* "For the letter *killeth,* but the spirit *giveth life*" (II. Cor. iii. 6). He did not "bind heavy and insupportable burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders," as did the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. xxiii. 4). But He offered us a yoke that was sweet and a burden that was light (Matt. xi. 30).

The whole mission of Our Lord upon earth, His teaching, His

passion, and the legacy of His love, in the adorable sacrifice, was an unfolding and a diffusion of the riches of the grace of God. "The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared *to all men*" (Tit. ii. 11). "And of his *fulness* we have *all* received" (John i. 16).

II. Not only has Our Lord purchased for us and bequeathed to us these riches of divine grace; He has also taken the means to "confirm us in them unto the end."

(a) By His own perpetual mediation in heaven. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just" (I. John ii. 1). "For *in* that he continueth forever, he hath an everlasting priesthood, whereby he is able to *save forever* them that come to God *by him;* always living *to make intercession for us*" (Heb. vii. 24, 25)

(b) By the preaching of His faithful ministers upon earth. "Verily their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the whole world" (Rom. x. 18). They are witnesses of Christ, whose "testimony is confirmed" in *all those* who receive their preaching, as the Corinthians had received the preaching of St. Paul and his companions, and they (the docile hearers of the word) "are made rich in *Christ,* in all utterance and all knowledge" (sic à Lapide et Kenrick, in loco).

(c) By the Sacraments with which He has enriched His Church.

(d) By the interior consolations which He Himself vouchsafes to every faithful soul that has recourse to Him. "Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. xi. 28).

Truly may He ask, "What is there that I ought to do more for my vineyard, and I have not done it?"

III. But however great the riches of grace that Christ has obtained for us, or the bounty of God in *offering* them to us, they will not insure our *salvation* unless we make good use of them.

Our Lord teaches this very clearly in *the parable of the talents*

(Matt. xxv. 14-30). The two servants who each made return according to the talents received, both obtained the same approval and reward. "Well done, good and faithful servant: because thou has been faithful over few things, I will place thee over many: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Doubtless the third would have received the same, had he *used his talent—corresponded to the grace that was given him.* But because he was "wicked, slothful and unprofitable" his talent was taken from him, and he was "cast out into exterior darkness," where "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

"*Only* he that *doth the will of my Father* who is in heaven shall enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. vii. 21).

"Every one that heareth these my words, *and doth them not,* shall be like a foolish man that built his house upon the sand" (Ibid. 26).

St. James repeats the warning of his divine Master. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James i. 22).

St. Peter assures us that "all things which *appertain to life and godliness* are given us" through Our Lord Jesus Christ. But he adds: "*Wherefore,* brethren, *labor the more,* that by good works you may make sure your calling and election" (II. Peter i. 3, 10).

Conclusion.—Exhortation: 1. To *confidence.* God gives *sufficient* grace to all. Hence no one is lost but through his own fault. 2. To *fidelity* in corresponding to grace received, in order to receive more. "To every one that hath, shall be given, and he shall abound" (Matt. xxv. 29). 3. To be eager to *hear* the word of God, and *faithful* in *keeping* it. Thus will "the testimony of Christ be confirmed in you, so that nothing will be wanting to you in any grace; and he will confirm you unto the end, without reproach."

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

Social Reform.

"Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man who according to God, is created in justice and holiness of truth."—Eph. iv. 23.

Exordium.—The social world is periodically agitated by spasms of zeal for the preservation of *purity of morals* and *public decency,* and for *the repression of vice.*

Most frequently the *civil authorities* are held responsible for whatever abuses there may be, and are called upon to *legislate* against the evil, and to *enforce* their legislation by means of the police, detectives, etc.

Certain newspapers take up the cry for *reform,* and denounce both the authorities and the officers of the law for failure in the discharge of duty, and at the same time blazon forth in sensational headlines and graphic (not to say almost obscene) illustration all the crimes and scandal, notorious or unheard-of, that can be found out or invented and exaggerated.

Other *"social reformers"* think to better the world, or at least to hold themselves aloof from its corruption, by a certain *gospel* of their own, which they consider wiser, better and more practical than that of the divine Teacher.

Whatever may be said for or against these various ways or methods of bettering the condition of society, *three things* are certain: 1. Purity of morals can never be obtained by *mere human legislation.* 2. The *reformation* of *society* must begin with the *reformation of its individual members.* 3. The *reformation of the*

individual must be the work of *his own free will,* aided by the grace of God, and acting in accordance with the teachings of the Gospel.

All this is either expressed or implied in the words of St. Paul in to-day's epistle. He was endeavoring to *reform* abuses that had crept into the various Christian communities of Asia Minor (cf. Fouard, "Last Days of St. Paul," p. 73 et seq.), and he seems to start from the *principle* laid down by our blessed Lord Himself: "Cast out first the *beam* out of thy own eye, and then thou shalt see to cast out *the mote* out of thy brother's eye" (Matt. vii. 5).

I. The reformation of *society* can be effected only through the reformation of its *individual members.*

This can not be done by *legislation* or *coercion.*

True morality is *voluntary compliance* with the law of God.

Man is unable to yield this *voluntary compliance* at all times and in all circumstances *without the aid of God's grace* (cf. Conc. Trid., Sess. VI., Can. ii.). Hence no human force or legislation can make him do it.

The first thing necessary, therefore, is "to be renewed *in the spirit of your mind;* and to put on *the new man,* who according to God, is created in justice and holiness of truth."

The *first man* was thus created. But "the *spirit* of *his* mind" was changed by sin. "All the thought of *his* heart was bent upon evil at all times" (Gen. vi. 5).

God therefore created a *new man.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the mystery of His incarnation, *regenerated* human nature in His own person, and in that of the redemption purchased the *regeneration* of all mankind, dependent, however, upon man's free acceptance of it: "As many as received Him, He gave them power to be made *the sons of God,* to them that

believe in His name. Who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but *of God*" (John i. 12, 13).

II. St. Paul tells us Christians, *sons of God* by adoption through our faith in Jesus Christ, *how* to "be renewed in the spirit of our mind," and *how* to "put on the new man."

"The spirit of our mind" should be that of *truth, sincerity, fair-dealing, candor.*

"*Therefore* speak ye the truth, every man with his neighbor; *for we are members of one another.*"

The scandal of dissensions among those who profess to be *Christians* and members of *one faith,* worshippers *and communicants* at the same altar.

Many forms of lying detrimental to one's neighbor's character, reputation, business interests, etc.

Lies told for selfish purposes. Lack of candor and sincerity in counsel, advice or profession of friendship.

Flattery which encourages our neighbor in his error or leads him into it.

"Be angry and sin not." One's very honesty and sincerity will prompt him to righteous indignation at the sight or knowledge of things manifestly wrong, immoral or unjust.

There are circumstances in which it is a duty to manifest that indignation—to denounce the wrongdoing, even to rebuke the offender.

But it must always be remembered that the offense is really *against God,* who has said: "Revenge is *mine,* and I will repay" (Deut. xxxii. 35).

Therefore *personal resentment* or desire of revenge must not be cherished or harbored in the mind. "Let not the sun go down upon your anger."

Give not place to the devil: By yielding to those vices, open or secret, that wreck *the home* and poison the very sources of all *moral* social life—intemperance, sensuality, licentiousness and the like. "Keep thyself unspotted from this world" (James i. 27).

"He that stole, let him steal now no more."

Stealing may be broadly defined, "Obtaining *by unjust means* that to which we had *no right,* and which we could not have obtained *by just and lawful means."*

This includes not only *secret thefts* and robbery by violence, but also deception, extortion, oppression, taking advantage of our neighbor's weakness or necessities, or even of his ignorance, or miscalculations, in order to benefit ourselves. There are *sneak thieves* and there are "gentlemen burglars," and there are "gentlemen highway robbers" and there are "blackmailers."

Laxity of conscience in regard to business methods may lead to more grievous sins *against justice* than many are aware of.

Let all take heed to the warning of the apostle.

Let him that has hitherto used doubtful methods now use them no more: "but rather let him labor, *working with his hands* (i. e., *doing*) *the thing which is good, that he may have something to give to him that suffereth need."*

An important and salutary warning, in these last words, to those who have riches, or are acquiring them rapidly.

III. It can not be denied that these advices of St. Paul cover the whole ground, and are based upon the only solid principles of *social reform.*

Not an idle dream to believe that if heeded and acted upon, they will produce the best results that it is in the power of man, even as the faithful servant of God, to obtain. They are addressed to those who, by their very profession, are committed to the task.

Needless to object that the wicked and the corrupt will not hearken. The apostle's words are addressed *primarily* to them. They are not expected to *lead,* but to *follow.*

Needless to object that those who are willing are few in number. "Fear not, *little flock,* for it hath pleased your Father to give you a kingdom" (Luke xii. 32).

"The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened" (Matt. xiii. 33).

Not a question of clamorous, ostentatious agitation.

The Catholic Church has always held aloof from that method of *reform.*

The work is to start from within: "Cast out first the beam out of thy own eye."

Conclusion.—Exhortation to take seriously to heart the lesson contained in to-day's epistle: To ponder well, and heed the advices given; to strive to act with perfect truthfulness, sincerity, frankness and honesty, as being "members one of another." Perfect unity, perfect charity, perfect sympathy with both the erring and the needy. Strive to lead an irreproachable, *moral* life. Have true zeal for the spread of God's kingdom on earth. But let the starting point be that given by the apostle: "Be renewed *in the spirit of your mind,* and put on *the new man,* who, according to God, is created in *justice* and *holiness of truth.*"

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

Christian Social Intercourse.

"Brethren, see how you walk circumspectly, not as unwise, but as wise: redeeming the time, because the days are evil."—Eph. v. 15, 16.

Exordium.—Mutual intercourse is, in the present order of things, a necessity of man's existence and happiness in this world. Men are mutually dependent upon one another for the necessaries and comforts of life, as well as for protection against dangers, accidents and conditions, or situations innumerable, in which man alone and unaided would inevitably perish.

Man enjoys the company, the society of his fellow men. Life would be a burden, perhaps *insupportable,* to him without it.

All this is doubtless in accordance with the will and all-wise providence of God.

Doubtless, too, that were all men and all women what they should be, this mutual intercourse would be an unmitigated blessing.

Unfortunately, such is not always the case. There are, indeed, many instances in which intercourse between virtuous and God-fearing persons preserves and increases virtue. Remarkable examples may be cited in certain thoroughly Catholic communities where purity of faith and simplicity of true Christian life have been preserved uncontaminated.

St. Paul tells us in to-day's epistle *how* and *why* this should be done by all Christians. The admonition supposes faults to be corrected or avoided. I. Faults that render social intercourse injurious. II. How they are to be corrected or avoided. III. Why they should be.

I. Hardly necessary to speak of the unbridled excesses of those who yield themselves up without restraint, scruple or remorse to drunkenness, profanity, obscene and scurrilous language; in a word, who abandon themselves to a life of licentious indulgence and debauchery.

But there is an untold amount of evil done in social and domestic intercourse by persons who make some real efforts to lead a *fairly good* Christian life.

1. By men who have reached the age of mature manhood, in their daily occupations and intercourse. By occasional, and in many instances by frequent or habitual, use of profane language; irreverent use of the Holy Name; improper subjects of conversation carried on in indecent language; bitter criticism and detraction of one's neighbor.

Result. Mutual disedification among those who profess to be Catholics. *Grievous scandal* to those who are not. Who will ever be drawn to respect the faith, or to embrace it, by such example?

2. *By husbands and fathers of families,* who, instead of exercising a proper influence at home, spend much of their time in places where the idle and thriftless usually congregate; where God and religion are certainly not in honor, and where language and topics of conversation are, to say the least, no reminder of a Christian's duty, and no aid to its accomplishment. Other evils of such rendezvous are well known.

Conduct at home. Harsh, disagreeable, fault-finding, discouraging to the mother, disedifying to the children.

3. *By wives and mothers.* By failure to do their part to make the home comfortable and attractive. Impatience, lack of charity and discretion in speaking of the faults of neighbors and of neighbors' children. Sad ignorance of the fact that whatsoever evil of this

kind that is uncharitably spoken of and published abroad, is very liable to enter, sooner or later, the home of the detractor.

4. *By young people of both sexes.* By going with improper associates, and to places improper though not *disreputable,* where they see things, hear things, say and do things that are not *unto edification,* for either themselves or those with whom they associate. Evils resulting therefrom may be specified.

These are some of the ways in which *social intercourse* becomes an evil, or the occasion of evil, whereas it was intended to be a blessing.

II. St. Paul gives the remedy: "Walk circumspectly." By this he does not mean that we should imitate the proud, haughty, self-conceited gait of the Pharisees. Simplicity and modesty of manner, lack of ostentation, is a characteristic Christian virtue. Hence he means decent, sober, honest, modest *deportment* in all *social* and *domestic* relations—in *actions, words* and *conversation;* in the discharge of *all* one's duties as a Christian.

Easily seen that the injunction will be, in great part, complied with by avoiding the faults already enumerated.

Efficacious remedy against *profanity,* the devotion tto the Holy Name.

Against all the other faults, devotion to the most blessed Sacrament and to the Sacred Heart, which supposes, of course, *the regular frequenting of the Sacraments.*

Another remedy proposed by the apostle is *pious reading* and *edifying conversation.* "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles."

These means easily available to all. There is an abundant selection of the plainest and most beautiful Psalms and hymns in Catholic

books of devotion—"The Psalter," "St. Vincent's Manual," "League Devotions of the Sacred Heart," and numberless others.

Besides these there are lives of saints, books on the spiritual life, and all religious subjects in sufficient number.

Regrettable fact that comparatively few of them are to be found in, perhaps, the majority of Catholic homes.

It might be still more regrettable to know just how many of even those few are read.

Absence of both religious *reading* and religious *conversation* in the Catholic family. Question as to the actual knowledge of the majority of Catholic men concerning subjects so important in the practical Christian life. More serious and delicate question of their *real interest* in them.

III. St. Paul gives *a special reason why* his admonition should be heeded: "Walk circumspectly, not as unwise, but as wise: *redeeming the time.*" That is, not only making good use of *the present,* but also repairing the faults and omissions of *the past.*

The *tone* and *spirit* that will prevail in Christian intercourse, within and without *the home circle,* will depend chiefly upon the example and the influence *of the elders.*

Few if any persons arrive at *the sober age* of life without having to look back upon at least *some* follies and indiscretions of their youth, without recalling times or occasions when *they* did not yield with docility and obedience to the good influences by which they were surrounded and by which they should have been guided.

Their duty, therefore, to *redeem the past.* In spite of their thoughtlessness and indifference, they received a certain *heritage* in the domestic and social conditions left to them by *their elders.* It is their most sacred duty to transmit that *heritage,* undiminished and

unimpaired, to the generation that is to follow them. It is thus that they will *redeem the time.*

Another reason why we should "walk circumspectly": "Because *the days are evil.*" Many forces at work to empoison the very sources of *social purity* and destroy all the sweetest fruits and choicest blessings of *social* and *domestic intercourse.* [This point alone might be developed at length and with great profit.]

Conclusion.—Insist upon the debt which each one owes to his fellow men in his intercourse with them. The purity of society, the salvation of souls, and the glory of God, all depend, in a measure, upon the faithful discharge of that debt. "Walk circumspectly. Become not unwise, but understanding what is the will of God."

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

The Christian's Armor.

"Put you on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil."—Eph. vi. 11.

Exordium.—The writings of St. Paul show that he *undertook* (and the results show that he *accomplished*), a threefold task:

First, he preached the gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, explaining it clearly and thoroughly. *Secondly,* he refuted the false doctrines of those who opposed Christianity; and warned his Christian converts against being seduced by false teachers, or overcome by persecutions, or by any manner of *exterior trials and temptations. Thirdly,* as in to-day's epistle, he warned them against the greatest of all dangers—that of *interior temptations;* and tells them how they may protect themselves effectually against them, viz.: By "putting on the armor of God."

He tells us: I. Why we need the armor of God. II. In what it consists. III. That with it, we shall be able "to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect."

I. Why we need the armor of God: Because "our wrestling is not against flesh and blood." That is, not against the evil machinations *of men*—their enmity, their injustice, their persecutions, their tyranny. All this is not to be feared. It can do us no harm: "Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you untruly: . . . Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven" (Matt. v. 11, 12). "And fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the souls" (Ibid. x. 28).

"But our wrestling is against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against *the spirits of wickedness* in high places."

St. Paul's meaning: He here gives the doctrine which has ever since been held and taught by the fathers and doctors of the Church, viz.: that, as there are different *orders,* or *grades* among the *good angels,* so there are among the *bad.* Some more powerful than others in the exercise of their malice and wickedness. Hence they are called *principalities,* and *powers;* "spirits of wickedness *in high places.*"

They are also called "*rulers* of the word of *this darkness;* because it is *in darkness* and *in secret* that they are most successful in leading man into sin (cf. à Lapide, in loco, et in cap. ii., 2).

Man is by nature corrupt, and prone to evil, but these "spirits of darkness," by whom he is constantly surrounded, wage incessant war upon him, striving to accomplish his eternal ruin, by urging him to offend God, *as they had offended* Him.

Hence the warning of St. Peter: "Be sober and watch; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist ye, *strong in faith*" (I. Peter, v. 8, 9). [For development and numerous quotations from Scripture and the fathers, cf. Gaume, Cat. Persev., Vol. I., less. xiv., xv.]

We need, therefore, the armor of God.

II. St. Paul tells us in what this armor of God consists:

Not in worldly wisdom, Pharisaical decorum, or godless maxims and standards of excellence. But in something higher, nobler, stronger—something truly and thoroughly *Christian.*

"Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with *truth,* and having on the breastplate of *justice.*"

Truth and *justice* should both be here understood in a twofold

sense: 1. *Truth* meaning true doctrine, and *true faith,* as opposed to error and false teaching. *Justice,* in the sense of that perfect rectitude of life—practice of all virtues, which renders man *just* and *acceptable* in the sight of God. 2. *Truth,* in the sense of *sincerity;* fidelity to all that one professes. *Justice,* in the sense of fair dealing with our fellow men.

"And your feet shod with the *preparation of the gospel of peace.*"

The Christian who is honest, sincere and faithful in observing the commandments of God will always be *prepared* to receive inspiration, strength, courage and *knowledge* from the teachings of the Gospel. He that follows any other guide will not: "If thou hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes" (Luke xix. 42).

"In all things taking *the shield of faith,* wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked enemy."

The light poured into the soul by faith, the knowledge which it gives of man's relations with God, and the motives and principles of action which it implants in the soul, all furnish the strongest shield of protection against one's own evil inclinations, and against the solicitations and attacks of "the rulers of the world of this darkness."

"Faith," says the apostle, "is the substance of things to be hoped for; the evidence of things that appear not" (Heb. xi. 1).

He enumerates the victories obtained by *the ancients* (i. e., those who lived before the coming of Christ) who took "the shield of faith" (Ibid.).

"And take unto you *the helmet of salvation.*"

The *helmet* is the symbol of *hope.* As the helmet protects the head from a blow that would otherwise prove fatal, so *hope,* or

confidence in God, wards off the fatal stroke of *despair,* and enables the faithful soul to continue the fight until the battle is won.

So many sad and deplorable instances of *despair* and *self-destruction.* Comparatively few among Catholics, but almost all of them the result of not putting on "the armor of God." Unfortunate young girls; young men the victims of vice; married men and women who have not allowed *God* and *religion* to enter sufficiently into their lives.

Lastly, after being fully clad in the soldier's *armor*—the girdle, the sandals, the breastplate, the shield, and the helmet, we must go forth to the battle armed with "the sword of the spirit, which is *the word of God.*"

III. Dwell upon the striking beauty and admirable simplicity of this perfect description of the Christian's *panoply of war* (cf. Conybeare, "Life and Epistles of St. Paul," ch. xxvii.). Insist upon the impregnable character of the *armor,* and upon the invincible strength of "the sword of the spirit—*the word of God.*"

In that divine Word alone are to be found the true principles and maxims of a *moral* life; i. e., of a life conformed to *the law* and the *will* of God, who alone sets the standard up to which we must live.

Thus clothed, and thus armed, the Christian will "be able to resist in the evil day," i. e., in the day of temptation and trial in this life, and in "the day of wrath" (*Dies irae*), when he shall be called upon to render an account of his stewardship. For it is then that he be able "to stand in all things perfect."

Conclusion.—Earnest exhortation to heed this admirable lesson given us by the apostle. "Be strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of His power."

Nothing on earth so noble, so admirable, so invincible, as man or woman clothed *in the armor of God.*

"Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with *truth,* and having on the breastplate of justice, and your feet shod *in the preparation of the gospel of peace.*"

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

Perseverance.

"And this I pray, that your charity may more and more abound in knowledge, and in all understanding; that you may approve the better things; that you may be sincere and without offence unto the day of Christ."—Philip. i. 9, 10.

Exordium.—In the epistle just read we have a beautiful expression of the great apostle's ardent love for his dear Christians of Philippi. They were the fruits of his own labor. They had kept the faith in spite of trials and persecutions. They had been generous in their almsgiving to their needy Christian brethren of Thessalonica, a hundred miles away (Fouard, St. Paul, Vol. I., 131; Conybeare, 272, 273; Gigot, Outlines N. T., 278). They had also shown their affection and generosity for him in his hour of trial (Conybeare, 67; see also Sketch for Palm Sunday).

The apostle expresses his confidence that Our Lord Jesus Christ will perfect the good work in them, i. e., give them the grace *to persevere unto the end.* And in his prayer, he asks for them the graces necessary for Perseverance. These are three: I. *Charity,* guided by knowledge and understanding. II. *Prudence.* III. *Sincerity.*

I. The *charity* of which St. Paul speaks is evidently the twofold precept: *Love of God* and *love of neighbor.*

The Philippians had so far practised both. They had been zealous for the propagation of the Gospel, the spreading of the kingdom of God, by their generous aid given to the apostles (Fouard, Vol. I., 115; Maclear, Class Book, N. T., 442).

They had shown their *love of neighbor* as indicated above.

St. Paul prays that this twofold charity may "more and more abound in *knowledge* and in all *understanding.*"

That is, that in their sincere love of God, they might know and understand *the truth,* and not be deceived and carried away by the *false doctrines* which were being preached to them by the enemies of the Gospel (cf. à Lapide, in loco).

Error in false teaching can never lead to *the God of Truth.*

Those who are very ignorant, or are misled by error, may indeed be saved, and often are, *by the special mercy of God.*

But it is the will of God that all should seek *the truth;* and that none should reject it.

The "knowledge and understanding" for which the apostle prays, is also necessary in the exercise of charity toward one's neighbor.

There is much "charity" that is not *according to knowledge* or *understanding.* 1. Charity (in the sense of almsgiving, material aid, and public benefactions) given *with sound of trumpet.* Our Blessed Lord says that "they have received their reward" (Matt. vi. 2); but not from "*their* Father who is in heaven." Charity (in the same sense) given with the *intended,* and often *avowed* object of drawing men away from God; v. g., institutions of various kinds professing to give material or intellectual aid, but carefully and successfully excluding all religious influence. Professing and attempting moral and intellectual *reform* and *education* without God or religion.

2. There is much of what the world is pleased to call *charity,* in the sense of *sympathy, moral support,* or *natural affection.*

Sympathy often bestowed (*in words only*) upon criminals and profligates, in a manner calculated to bring discredit upon law and justice, and to lower the standard of decency and morality.

Moral support, often given to those manifestly in the wrong, and for the sake of saving them from merited disgrace, only encourages them and others in evil-doing.

Such "charity" is not according to "knowledge and understanding." Neither is that which proceeds from mere *natural affection.* Our Lord has passed sentence upon it: "If you love (only) them that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans this?" (Matt. v. 46).

Examples of charity that are according to "knowledge and understanding,"—and consequently pleasing to God:

The poor widow casting in her two mites along with the offerings of the rich (Luke xxi. 1). The Good Samaritan (Luke x. 30-37). Moses renouncing the honors and luxuries of the Egyptian court, to share the trials and hardships of his downtrodden people (Heb. xi. 24). Tobias ministering to the needs of his fellow captives in Ninive (Tob. i., ii.).

In all these cases there was evidently a deep and abiding sense of God's overruling power, and a corresponding conviction that the exercise of charity was the doing of His holy will.

Charity performed in such sentiments and from such motives "*abounds* in knowledge and in all understanding."

II. *Prudence.* St. Paul's second petition: "That you may *approve the better things.*" His first meaning evidently was, that the Philippians might judge prudently and correctly between the gospel which he had preached to them and the false teachings which were being thrust upon them on every side (cf. à Lapide, in loco).

The *prudence* and *discernment* for which he prayed are as much needed in our day as then—even more.

Catholics hear more and read more that comes from doubtful

and unreliable sources than they hear from the Catholic pulpit, or read in safe and instructive books.

The numberless speeches, lectures and "talks," in social organizations, more or less *non*-Catholic. Magazine and newspaper articles. No question, social, moral or religious, that they do not hear discussed.

Certainly they need the *prudence* and *discernment* for which the apostle prays, in order that in all that maze of thought and conflicting ideas they "may approve the better things."

Proper to urge them to seek and acquire this *prudence* and *discernment* by greater zeal and interest in what they know comes from reliable sources.

The same prudence and discernment is also sorely needed in daily life. All the evils that afflict the human race have their origin in the failure of our first parents to "approve the better things." Men still fail in the same way: Sacrificing *duty* and *conscience* and *principle* to *expediency, human respect, momentary gain,* or *sinful gratification.* Serving *man* rather than *God.* Preferring Barabbas to Jesus!

III. *Sincerity.* "That you may be *sincere* and without offence, unto the day of Christ, *filled with the fruit of justice.*" The apostle continues in the same line of thought: He uses the word "sincere," *first,* in the sense of *genuine, unmixed.* No mixture of *true* and *false doctrine.* No compromise with error. No *apology* for the gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ. No foolish and foolhardy attempt to reconcile it with the *new* and *broad* and *fashionable* doctrines of self-constituted teachers, who arrogate to themselves the *infallibility* that they deny to the *vicar of Christ,* and more.

Secondly, the apostle uses the word *sincere,* in the sense of *honest, unfeigned.* The Christian who hopes to be "without

offence unto the day of Christ,"—the great *accounting* day—and to be "filled with the fruit of all justice," must be *honest* and *just* in his *profession* of moral rectitude, and in his dealings with his fellow men. No hypocrisy, no fraud, deception, injustice, selfishness, extortion, no pharisaical condemnation of the faults of others.

Conclusion.—There can be no doubt that those who thus practise the three virtues, Charity, Prudence and Sincerity, will be blessed with the grace of *final perseverance;* that the prayer of St. Paul will be heard; and his confidence in them will be fully realized: "That He who hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus."

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

Habitual Thought of the Future Life.

"Our conversation is in heaven: from whence also we look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ."—Philip. iii. 20, 21.

Exordium.—Summary of the epistle: 1. An advice and exhortation to choose and follow good models. 2. A sorrowful allusion to false teachers, and to weak and dissolute Christians (Ita Kenrick, in loco), "who glory in their shame, who mind earthly things." 3. The apostle tells us plainly that "our conversation is in heaven." 4. He makes a kind and earnest appeal to two prominent women of the congregation, who had labored zealously and well in the cause of the new faith, but were, it would seem, at variance with each other (Kenrick, in loco; and Conybeare, "Life and Epistles of St. Paul," xxvi., p. 670). He therefore *begs* and *beseeches* them "to be of one mind in the Lord."

The central and most striking idea in the epistle is this: *Our conversation is in heaven.* The assertion will, of course, make little or no impression upon those "who mind earthly things." Certainly they will continue to contradict it by their actions: *their* "conversation" is *on earth.*

Even many persons *of good will* will fail, or have failed, to understand the meaning of the apostle's words. They imagine that they can be true only of *the hermit* and *the recluse*—of those who have buried themselves in the silence and solitude of the wilderness or the cloister. I. The meaning of the apostle's words. II. Their application to all Christians. III. How they are to be realized in daily life.

I. *Conversation,* in our day, is popularly understood to mean *verbal intercourse* between two or more persons; *talking together* on any and all subjects, serious or trivial.

It has other meanings, older and more strictly in conformity with the origin of the word—*conversare,* to *live with* or among. Hence it means *conduct* or *deportment.* St. Paul frequently uses it in this sense: "You have heard of *my conversation* in time past in the Jew's religion: how that, beyond measure, I have persecuted the church of God, and wasted it" (Gal. i. 13). Not *good conduct,* as he himself admitted.

Writing to the Chistians of Asia Minor, he says: "Put off, according to *former conversation,* the old man, who is *corrupted* according to the desire of error" (Eph. iv. 22). Again, to the converts from Judaism, scattered about in various places where the Gospel had been preached, he says: "Remember your prelates, . . . considering the end of *their conversation*" (Heb. xiii. 7). That is, respect, reverence and obey them; follow their teaching, *on account of their exemplary conduct* (cf. Kenrick et à Lapide, in loco).

St. James and St. Peter use the word in the same sense: "Let him (that is wise) shew, *by a good conversation,* his work in the meekness of wisdom" (James iii. 13).

"Be you, *in all manner of conversation, holy*" (I. Peter ii. 15). "Having *your conversation good* among the Gentiles" (Ibid. ii. 12).

The word *conversation* means also *thinking,* not *talking.* It means *the occupation of the mind* with certain *thoughts, plans* or *intentions.* Meditating upon them; turning them over and over again; *staying with them,* or *living in them* (cf. any good Latin dictionary).

Evidently used in this sense in to-day's epistle. Those whom the

apostle reproves have *their mind* (i. e., *their thoughts*) fixed upon "earthly things." Their *habitual thought* is of them. "*But our* conversation is in heaven." That is, *our habitual thought* is (or should be) *of heavenly things.*

II. The words of the apostle are, therefore, or *should be,* true of all Christians: "Our *conversation* is in heaven."

Every serious, prudent person *thinks* far more than he *speaks.* His chief end or aim in life is the chief subject of his thoughts. Be that end good or evil, honest and legitimate or the contrary, it is *habitually* uppermost in his mind, even while exteriorly occupied, or engaged in *conversation* (in the popular sense) with his friends and neighbors—making himself, perhaps, very *agreeable.* Does not tell them all that he is thinking about, or lay bare to them all his plans. The more sensible and prudent he is, the less he will say about them.

Examples innumerable in every walk of life: The honest, intelligent young man, legitimately ambitious *to make his way* and rise to something higher; the prudent, industrious father, trying to provide for the support of his family and the education of his children; the man of growing wealth, striving to increase it; the man of millions already acquired, busy with schemes of safe investment or further aggrandizement.

All these have *a conversation* not expressed in idle words or needless and fruitless discussion. It consists in *the habitual thought* of what they believe to be of the most serious importance to them.

This *habitual thought* applied to *the future life* is precisely what the apostle means by having "our conversation in heaven."

III. Hence the *conversation* of which he speaks consists more in *thought* and *reflection* than in *words.*

No need of pharisaical *preaching* or sanctimonious pretensions.

There are indeed times when a strong and open profession of faith is a duty. But the sturdiest Christians are the last to make a vain or needless display of their religion and piety.

This thought of the future life should never be the cause or occasion of gloomy brooding over the uncertainty of the future, or the difficulty of "the way of the cross." "Cast thy care upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee" (Ps. liv. 23).

No danger that this *habitual thought of the future life* will interfere with the thought that should be given to temporal affairs and daily duties. On the contrary, it should be the *mainspring,* the impelling and guiding force of all Christian action, energy and enterprise.

With this thought habitually in the mind, and exercising its proper influence, there can be no such word as *failure* in the Christian's life.

The *broken shaft,* not infrequently seen in cemeteries, is *an unchristian emblem.* The only idea it can truthfully represent is that of a life that has been *wilfully cut short* by the poor creature whose remains lie beneath. God never mars the life of any of those for whom Our Saviour died—and He *died for all.*

The success of *the present life* depends *not* upon its length, or upon the amount that is achieved during it, *but* upon *the manner in which it is spent.* "Venerable old age is *not* that of *long time,* nor counted by *the number of years:* but the *understanding* (i. e., the prudence) of man *is gray hairs.* And *a spotless life* is *old age*" (Wis. iv. 8, 9).

Conclusion.—The thought *of the future life* is therefore a consoling, strengthening, encouraging thought; one that should come *naturally* to the Christian's mind and remain there *habitually.* It would be folly to try to banish it.

The present life is short, uncertain; full of sorrows, misfortunes,

disappointments. *To-morrow* belongs to no human being. *No one* can promise himself that he shall see it. But *all* may hope "to see the good things of the Lord *in the land of the living*" (Ps. xxvi. 13).

Our divine Saviour assures us that "in *his* Father's house there are many mansions" (John xiv. 2).

In that house, "God hath prepared for them that love Him ing, nor sorrow shall be any more; for the former things have passed away" (Apoc. xxi. 4).

In that house, "God hath prepared for them that love Him, things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man" to conceive or imagine (I. Cor. ii. 9).

Be mindful, therefore, always of the words of the apostle: "Our conversation is in heaven: from whence also we look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, who will reform the body of *our lowness,* made like to the body of *his glory.*"

TWENTY-FOURTH AND LAST SUNDAY AFTER WHITSUNDAY.

Preparation for the Second Coming of Our Lord.

"We cease not to pray for you, and to beg that you may be filled with the knowledge of the will of God, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding: that you may walk worthy of God, in all things pleasing."—Col. i. 9, 10.

Exordium.—To-day marks the close of the *liturgical year.* In her beautiful *liturgy,* or public offices, the Church places before her children, from one end of the year to the other, the truths and mysteries of religion in a manner to make them more impressive and instructive.

As our divine Saviour is the *centre and soul* of all worship profitable to man and pleasing to God, our Holy Mother Church begins her liturgical year with what she calls *Advent:* Four weeks of earnest, prayerful preparation for the worthy celebration of the joyful mystery of the *first coming of the Redeemer.*

The first half of the year thus begun is crowded with the great mysteries of the redemption and sanctification of man: The Immaculate Conception of Mary; the birth of the Messias; His *manifestation* to the Gentiles; the mystery of His Passion and death; His glorious resurrection and triumphant ascension; and finally the descent of the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier, upon the apostles at Pentecost.

The second half of the year is also brightened with the feasts of saints, and of the most blessed Mother of God; while the epistles and gospels of the Sundays furnish a body of simple and sublime teaching admirably adapted to lead *all,* the lowly and the unlettered, as well as the rich, the most learned and intelligent, safely into the

knowledge of *the things of God*—"the things that are *for their peace* (cf. "Liturgical Year," Dom Gueranger, Time after Pentecost).

To-day, as the culmination of this teaching, our Holy Mother Church gives us *in the Gospel* Our Lord's own warning as to the sudden ending of the material universe, with its attendant evils (errors, false teachers and conscious guilt), when "the Son of man shall come in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty, and shall send his angels with a trumpet and a great voice, to gather together his elect from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them."

In the epistle, on the other hand, we are given the beautiful prayer of St. Paul for his dear Christians at Colossae.*

It contains, in a few words, the summary of what the Christian should do in order to prepare for *that great day,* the coming of which "no one knoweth, no not even the angels of heaven, but *the Father alone*" (Matt. xxiv. 36).

Simple, informal explanation of the text, as applicable to Christians of all time:

St. Paul prays for those gifts and graces which he knows to be necessary for all those who would "walk worthy of God, in all things pleasing."

I. To be "*filled* with the knowledge of God, in all *wisdom* and *spiritual understanding.*"

Filled with it; so that it will be a part of our *intellectual, rational* life. God should not be to us, as He was to the learned and cultured Athenians, "the *unknown* God." "For in Him we live, and move, and are" (Acts xvii. 28).

We should know that His holy will is "our sanctification" (I. Thess. iv. 3; cf. Sketch for Second Sunday of Lent).

* See Sketch for Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

II. Christian's knowledge of God must be according to "*Wisdom* and *spiritual* understanding." "It happeneth that many," says the author of "The Following of Christ," "by frequent hearing of the Gospel, are very little affected; because they have not *the spirit of Christ.* . . . What doth it avail thee, to discourse profoundly of the Trinity, if thou be void of humility, and consequently displeasing to the Trinity? In truth, sublime words make not a man *holy* and *just;* but a virtuous life maketh him dear to God" (Imit., I., i., ii., iii.). "What availeth a great dispute about abstruse and obscure matters, for not knowing which we shall not be questioned at the day of judgment?" (Ibid., iii., 1).

"It is better to have little knowledge *with humility,* and a weak understanding, than greater treasures of learning *with self-conceit*" (Imit., III., vii., 3).

III. The Christian should be "fruitful in *every good work.*" All know what this means: Honesty and sincerity in social and business relations; fidelity in the discharge of Christian duties, according to one's state of life; zeal and generosity in the cause of religion, whether by conduct and example or in giving material support; charity to the poor, etc.

IV. The Christian should "*increase* in the knowledge of God." This is to be done by regular attendance, in obedience to the commands of the Church, and reverential attention to sermons and instructions; not looking for "loftiness of speech," but for *the simple word of God*—for "the good seed," and being careful not to let it fall "by the wayside," nor "upon stony ground," nor "among thorns and briers" (Matt. xiii.).

V. The Christian should be "strengthened with all might, according to the power of the glory of God." How? "In all patience and long-suffering," bearing, even "with joy," the trials,

contradictions, sorrows and bereavements of this life; and "giving thanks to God the Father, who hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints *in light;* who hath delivered us from *the power of darkness;* and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins."

Conclusion.—Such the beautiful, salutary, loving message of our Holy Mother Church, as she closes her annual round of instructions and exhortations.

For thousands and thousands it will be *her last message.* Who are they that will never hear it again? That is not known "even to the angels of heaven, but to the Father alone."

Exhortation to all to heed the lesson; to look back over the past year, and to prepare to begin the new liturgical year well, with the holy season of Advent; and to join heart and soul in the prayer of the great apostle: "We cease not to pray for you, and beg that you may be filled with the knowledge of the will of God, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding: that you may walk worthy of God, in all things pleasing."

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

Out of Darkness into Light.

"It is now the hour to rise from sleep; for our salvation is nearer than when we believed."—Rom. xiii. 11.

Exordium.—The epistle just read gives us a beautiful and appropriate lesson for the beginning of the new *liturgical year* (cf. Sketch for preceding Sunday).

The apostle tells the faithful of his day that the darkness which had hung over the world since the fall of Adam had at length been dispelled: "The night is past, and the day is at hand."

The words, "Your salvation is *nearer than when you believed,*" apply to the Jews who through long ages had been expecting the Messias. The intensity of their desire for *the coming* increased as time wore on, and found beautiful expression in the words of the prophet some seven hundred years before the birth of Our Lord. "Drop down dew, ye heavens, and let the clouds rain THE JUST" (Is. xlv. 8).

The poor Gentiles were in still greater darkness. They knew nothing of the expected Messias. Had even lost the true idea of the *one God,* whose glory they had "*changed* into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man, and of birds, and of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things." They had "changed the truth of God into a lie; and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (Rom. i. 23, 25).

The Just One had come at last, and hence "salvation was nearer" than it had been during all the long ages of weary waiting. But neither Jews nor Gentiles, with very few exceptions, had recognized and received Him.

Those to whom St. Paul addressed the words of the epistle had come to the knowledge of the truth. They believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the expected Messias.

He exhorts them therefore to "rise from sleep"; to "cast off the works of *darkness* and put on the armor of *light*."

We were not born in the darkness, but when the world was already illuminated by the SUN OF JUSTICE.

By the grace of baptism, and by the repeated instruction we have received, the *day-star* has arisen in our hearts (II. Peter i. 19). We should therefore the more readily take the exhortation to ourselves and try to heed it.

I. We are exposed to relapses into darkness. II. How we are to emerge from it—to "rise from sleep." III. Special dangers to be avoided.

I. Though "the spirit is willing the flesh is weak" (Mark xiv. 38). In spite of our efforts, in spite of numerous exhortations, and the impressiveness of the great truths and mysteries to which our attention is called during the year, the sluggishness of our nature weighs us down. *The pleasures and frivolities* of the world are the rock and the wayside upon which the good seed falls only to perish. *The cares* of the world are the thorns that choke the seed (Luke viii. 12-14).

During the long months of summer and autumn—between Pentecost and Advent—the world offers many pleasures, attractions and cares of various kinds, all tending to allure the passions, draw the mind away from the things of God, or at least to make piety grow cold.

During that time many fall away from their former fervor, many go back into the darkness of unrepented sin.

It is now "the hour for them to rise from sleep."

Moreover, "the Bridegroom cometh," and those who would enter the nuptial chamber with Him should be up and watching, with oil in their lamps (Matt. xxv. 1-13).

Such the reasons for the warning and the exhortation given at the beginning of the holy season of Advent.

II. We are told plainly how we are to rise from the sleep of slothfulness and sin:

"Cast off the works of darkness." Let each one see what those works have been:

"The flesh *always* lusteth against the spirit" (Gal. v. 17). Perhaps it has gained some fatal victories. Perhaps it has at least weakened and enervated the spirit by slothfulness and self-indulgence, thus leaving the soul an easy prey to any or all of the sins mentioned by the apostle.

These are "the works of darkness" that must be cast off. "Walk honestly, as in the day." All manner of sin is conceived and perpetrated in darkness and secrecy.

As night, which is divinely ordered as a time of peaceful repose, is constantly employed by many in offending God by the grossest and most degrading excesses, so in the darkness of the sin-addicted soul all passions, evil desires, envious, covetous and carnal thoughts hold unimpeded revel.

Contrast between those who thus grope in the darkness and those who with a good conscience "walk honestly, as in the day."

> "Virtue could see to do what virtue would,
> By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
> Were in the flat sea sunk. . . .
> He that has light in his own clear breast,
> May sit i' the center, and enjoy bright day;
> But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,
> Benighted walks under the midday sun,—
> Himself his own dungeon."
>
> *Milton's Comus,* line 377 et seq.

III. Special dangers to be avoided:

Corrupt nature is prone to abuse the choicest gifts of God.

While He in His mercy often draws good out of evil, "our adversary the devil" constantly strives to turn all things *into evil*—our good actions, our good intentions and *our joys.*

By a wonderful dispensation of God's providence the world is always radiant with joy at Christmas. The spirit of generosity and good-will seems to seize upon all hearts. Even those who believe not in the great mystery of the Nativity yield themselves to the all-pervading spirit of mirth and joy.

But alas! very many deliberately rejoice with the *author of evil,* instead of with *the God of peace and good-will.*

The season of *holy joy* and *thanksgiving* becomes a time of unbridled license, indecent revelry and deliberate offense to God.

Many Christians are annually drawn into this vortex of vice. Many, without deliberately willing it, take it as a foregone conclusion that they will not pass over Christmas without grievously offending God.

The terrible number of crimes, fatal accidents and deaths in sin that annually desecrate the day of our blessed Saviour's birth.

Conclusion.—Advent the time to ward off these deplorable evils. Let those who know their weakness in the past prepare to resist the temptations to which they will be exposed. Let those who, by the grace of God, are stronger help their weaker brethren.

No better work, no more sacred duty, than to strive with united effort to procure a proper Christian observance of the holy Feast of Christmas.

Individual effort also. Each one striving to prepare in his own soul a fitting habitation for *the God of Love.*

"It is now the hour to rise from sleep. Cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light."

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

The Gospel of Peace.

"Wherefore receive one another as Christ also hath received you unto the honor of God."—Rom. xv. 7.

Exordium.—We may find in to-day's epistle a lesson strikingly appropriate as a preparation for the coming of the King of Peace. The apostle is again pleading for peace and Christian brotherhood between the Jew and the Gentile converts. The term *Gentile* in the Bible generally means any and all of the peoples of the earth that were not descended from Abraham or included in the promises made to him.

The Jews, proud of the singular favors which they had for ages received from Jehovah, looked down upon the Gentiles, and, even as Christians, were loth to recognize them as equals in the matter of faith and divine favor. Those of the Jews who had come to recognize Our Lord as the true Messias found additional nourishment for their foolish pride in the fact that He was of their race, and that He had approved their Law and confirmed the promises made to their fathers, the Patriarchs.

The apostle tells them that though they had received many special favors from God, yet the Gentiles were also the objects of His gratuitous love, and would have reason "to glorify Him for His mercy." Holy David had foretold it ages before: "I will confess to thee, O Lord, among the Gentiles. Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles, and magnify him, all ye peoples." The great prophet Isaias had said: "There shall be a root of Jesse

(Our Lord Jesus Christ), and he that shall rise up *to rule the Gentiles,* in him the Gentiles shall hope" (Rom. xv. 12).

I. The lesson which St. Paul wished to teach is equally applicable at the present day. II. How we are to put it in practice *by charity.* III. How we should put it in practice *by zeal* and *generosity.*

I. The apostle evidently wishes to impress the fact that no man, no race, no class of persons has a strict right to the gifts or mercies of God. Whatever He bestows upon us is bestowed *gratuitously.* He had gratuitously revealed Himself in a special manner to the Jews; had made His promises to them, thus giving them the assurance of blessings to come,—*provided* they were faithful in their service to Him.

But all this did not mean that they were the sole objects of His infinite goodness and mercy. On the contrary, He loves all His creatures. "He is not a respecter of persons. But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh justice, is acceptable to him." (Acts. x. 34, 35). "There is no distinction of the Jew and the Greek; for the same is Lord over all, rich unto all that call upon him" (Rom. x. 12). "Christ died for all" (II. Cor. v. 15). Even "for the ungodly" (Rom. v. 6). "The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared *to all men"* (Titus ii. 11).

"Wherefore receive one another as Christ also hath received you, unto the honor of God."

This is "the Gospel of Peace" which St. Paul preached so earnestly to the Christians of his day, and of all time, the gospel which our Holy Mother Church preaches to us now when we are preparing to commemorate the coming of Him who brought "Peace on earth to men of good-will."

This "Gospel of Peace" should be preached *in action* rather than *in words,* to the weak ones *in the fold,* to the erring ones *out of the*

fold, and to the ignorant and the heathen, "who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death."

II. The Gospel of Peace is to be preached *by charity,* toward the weak and perverse *within the fold,* and to those in both good and bad faith *without the fold.* We should "have compassion on them that are ignorant, and that err," remembering that we ourselves are "compassed with infirmity" (Heb. v. 2).

The sinner is a worse enemy to himself than to any one else. This is true even of the murderer, the assassin, the robber, the calumniator. Though there be malice in his every thought, word and action, still he can do no real injury to others. He only treasures up to himself "wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the just judgment of God" (Rom. ii. 5). Even though he may seem to triumph and prosper in his iniquity, his triumph is short. "Man's days are as grass" (Ps. cii. 15), "which is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven" (Matt. vi. 30). But God is *eternal,* and He can bide His time. Neither is He mocked. "For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap" (Gal. vi. 8). "Revenge to me, and I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. xii. 19). The more wicked and malicious the sinner, the more inevitable his *eternal death.* No one would stand by and see a drunkard, a lunatic, or even a desperado expose himself to certain death without making an effort to save him. Why not do as much for a poor creature that is trying to cast himself body and soul into hell?

God himself does *not* "wish the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezech. xxxiii. 11). More easily may our charity and sympathy go forth to those who sin through weakness, however degrading their excesses; however great the evil and disgrace they bring upon parents, relatives, friends,

home and children. Many seem utterly beyond correction and amendment. God alone knows how many may be reclaimed by prayer, patience, and Christian charity and sympathy. To those *without the fold,* we are debtors before God, by the law of charity.

Many are thoroughly sincere in their convictions. They came by them as we came by ours: inherited them from parents and teachers; have been confirmed in them by education, surroundings, and traditions,—and *by our faults and inconsistencies.*

Many of them are as willing to make sacrifices for their sincere convictions as we are for ours.

Many of them lead lives of virtue that might well put a large number of the household of the faith to shame.

Many *are* daily making sacrifices for conscience sake, when the truth dawns upon them, that perhaps *we* would not have the courage and generosity to make, were we subjected to an equal trial.

True that sometimes we are grossly misrepresented and even bitterly reviled and calumniated. This may come from ignorance, malice, or earnest and sincere bigotry.

Our blessed Lord, in His last loving discourse to His disciples, warned them against trials even worse than these; and at the same time gave the erring ones credit for sincerity: "The hour cometh, that whosoever *killeth you,* will think that he doth *a service to God*" (John xvi. 2).

Whatever be the motive or the provocation, *the Gospel of Peace* forbids bitter religious dissension, discussion, or recrimination. "The anger of man worketh not the justice of God" (James i. 20). Our blessed Lord has given us the example we should follow: "Who when he was reviled, did not revile: when he suffered, he threatened not; but delivered himself up to him that judged him unjustly" (I. Pet. ii. 23).

Word of warning: *The Gospel of Peace* does not require or teach the sacrifice of minimizing of Catholic truth and doctrine; does not mean *indifference* or so-called *liberalism* and *broad-mindedness* in religion. No compromising on points or practices of faith; no easy-going, indiscriminate participation in religious services of any and all creeds.

It means firm, uncompromising adherence to the teachings of the Catholic Church, and fidelity and consistency in living up to them. The Catholic who knows his faith as he should has nothing to be ashamed of, or to apologize for.

Charity, courtesy and respect for those who strive to worship God according to their own lights and convictions; and also for those who unfortunately have not found *the light* at all.

"Walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called. With all humility, and mildness, with patience supporting one another in charity. Careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of *peace*" (Eph. iv. 1-3).

III. Spread of *the Gospel of Peace* by *zeal* and *generosity*. Co-operation in various good works. "Every one as he hath determined in his heart, not with sadness or of necessity; *for God loveth the cheerful giver*" (II. Cor. ix. 7).

A *generous* gift not necessarily *a large one*. "If thou have much, give abundantly: if thou have little, take care even so to bestow a little willingly" (Tob. iv. 9).

The widow's mite was worth more than all the offerings of the rich (Luke xxi. 1-3). True, not only of *the merit*, but also of *the fruitful* blessing which God often bestows upon it. Works worthy of zealous aid and support: care of orphans, of the ignorant, the poor, and the homeless;—to preserve them from losing the faith, or being driven to a life of sin.

Aid to *poor missions* in our own country, where, by force of circumstances, a few poor Catholics are cut off from the blessings and consolations of Church, and Priest, and Sacraments.

Generosity in contributing to the decency, beauty and splendor of divine worship,—making it, as far as we can, worthy of the God whom we adore, and the Mysteries in which we believe.

Lastly, zeal and generosity in the great work of the *propagation of the faith*, the carrying of the glad tidings to those who "sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death; to direct their feet in the way of peace" (Luke i. 79).

Conclusion.—A great and noble work for the holy season of Advent. Those who enter heartily into it will have rich presents to lay at the feet of our *King of Peace.*

They will help in the realization of the apostle's prayer, that all may acknowledge the "one Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all" (Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6), and the desire of our blessed Lord Himself, that there be "one fold and one shepherd" (John x. 16).

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

The Source and the Fruit of Christian Joy.

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice."—Philip. iv. 4.

Exordium.—There is a decided note of joy sounded in to-day's epistle. Also in the Mass and other offices of the day (cf. Liturgical Year, Advent, III. Sunday). All this is admirably adapted to prepare us for the great Christmas Solemnity—the Feast of Joy and Peace.

But the words of St. Paul do not refer *solely* to Christmas. We find in them a lesson for every day of the year: for every day of the Christian's life. They make known to us briefly but clearly the *source and the fruit of true Christian joy*: I. True Christian joy is to be found in God alone. II. The preservation of this joy depends upon our habitual conduct. III. The fruit of the joy thus obtained and preserved is "the *peace of God,* which surpasseth all understanding."

I. "Rejoice in the Lord—*always.*" Rejoice in God *by faith,*—believing that He is our *sovereign good,* and that He is "a rewarder of them that seek him" (Heb. xi. 6).

Faith enables us to understand better the ways of God's providence, and to accept its dispensations, even when, from a merely human point of view, they seem to be hard, adverse, disastrous. For "faith is the substance of things to be *hoped for,* the *evidence* of things that *appear not*" (Heb. xi. 1).

Hence "rejoice in the Lord *always.*" In misfortunes, adversities, trials and persecutions, as well as in happiness, peace, and pros-

perity (cf. à Lapide, in loco). Knowing that "that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look *not* at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (II. Cor. iv. 17, 18).

No true joy but that which is *in God;* i. e., which arises from the consciousness of doing His will, and of being pleasing to Him.

"The joys of the world are opposed to the joys of the Lord," says St. Anselm (apud à Lapide). "And as *no man can serve two masters,* so no man can rejoice in the Lord, and also rejoice in the world. Therefore rejoice not in the world, but in the Lord; not in iniquity, but in truth; not in the *fading* flower of vanity, but in the hope of eternity" (see also SS. Bernard, Basil, Chrysostom and others, apud à Lapide).

II. "Let your *modesty* be known to all men."

By *modesty* is here meant *propriety* in all exterior conduct,—in all that men see us do (not, of course, that this alone is sufficient). Must let them see that we are kind, patient, prudent, just, charitable, sober; uncontaminated by the vices of the world. In a word, we must let them see that our whole conduct is consistent with our profession and our Christian vocation. "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. v. 16).

The manly courage and unquenchable consolation of him who knows that his reputation is good among his fellow men, and whose conscience bears him testimony that he honestly deserves it; that he has used no unfair or unlawful means to acquire it; that he has sacrificed no principle of honor, justice, or religion; has defrauded neither God nor man.

Very little joy in pharisaical decorum, or in popularity dishonestly

acquired. Consciousness of guilt and hypocrisy, remorse, and fear of detection and exposure, are canker worms that eat the heart out of whatever passing joy or gratification there may be in the hollow triumph.

But however honest, sincere and persistent one's efforts may be, moments of trial, discouragement and apparent failure will inevitably come. "All who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution" (II. Tim. iii. 12); i. e. be subjected to divers kinds of trials. One's own weakness and weariness in well-doing will be a source of trial and discouragement, and fear; and will tend to drive out joy from the heart.

Prayer the safeguard against all such trials and temptations; the source or well-spring from which our joy will be renewed and sustained. "Be nothing solicitous; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, *with thanksgiving,* let your petitions be made known to God."

Since He is the real and only source of our joy, it is but reasonable that we should have recourse to Him when the clouds of sorrow, sadness and discouragement sweep over our soul. Prayer is the key that unlocks the treasury of His graces and consolations.

III. The fruit of the joy given by almighty God, and preserved by our own efforts, is *His peace,* "which surpasseth all understanding."

"The peace of God" is: 1. Peace *with* God,—because He has nothing against us. 2. Peace with ourselves,—free from all reproaches of conscience. 3. Peace with our fellow men,—knowing that they have no cause of enmity towards us; while we on our part, by the indwelling of "God who is Uncreated Peace" (St. Anselm), in our souls, cast into oblivion all the injuries we have received from others, and all thought of resentment.

The attainment of this peace may be difficult, but not *impossible*. Far less difficult than it is imagined to be. It comes, as the apostle tells us, as the result and reward of our doing certain things which are no more than the simple duty of every Christian.

A *reward* exceeding great,—"surpassing all understanding." A *grace* which "will keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Conclusion.—Exhortation to learn well, and to strive to put in practice this simple and beautiful lesson: To realize that God alone is the source of all true and lasting joy; and that this joy can not be sustained and nourished in the soul except by habitual prayer and an exemplary life,—a life of *practical faith.* To realize the difference between "rejoicing *in the Lord*" and rejoicing *with the world;* between that *radiance of soul* which is the result of a life of virtue, sobriety and godliness, and that fleeting, fluctuating, and often immoderate and boisterous mirth, excited only to die away in bitterness, by vain pleasures or sinful excesses.

Warning against the godless revelry and the many grievous sins of intemperance that (sad to say) annually desecrate the Holy Christmastide.

Those who wallow in iniquity, or willingly bow their necks beneath the yoke of Satan, can not rejoice with Christ. Earnest appeal to all to harken to the words of the apostle: "Rejoice in the Lord always. Let your modesty be known to all men. And the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, *will* keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord."

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

The Priest: His Office, Personality and Vocation.

"Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God."—I. Cor. iv. 1.

Exordium.—Special circumstances caused St. Paul to set forth this claim for himself and his fellow workers, when he and they were laboring, in face of much opposition, to spread the gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

From that day to this the Catholic Church has made the same claim for her priests.

It is indeed a lofty one. Is repudiated by some; while to others it may seem to be exaggerated. Nevertheless it rests upon Scripture warrant, and needs only to be understood, in order to be found reasonable. I. The priest is truly "the minister of Christ, and the dispenser of the mysteries of God." II. He is only a man "taken from among men, and compassed with infirmity." III. He assumes the priesthood in response to what he believes to be *a divine call.*

I. The priest is the *minister of Christ* by divine selection and appointment: "I have chosen you; and have appointed you, that you should go forth and bring forth fruit; and that your fruit should remain" (John xv. 16).

"You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8).

"As the Father hath sent me, I also send you" (John xx. 21). "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me" (Luke x. 16).

"All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore, teach ye *all nations*. . . . Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

These texts prove that Our Lord selected and appointed ministers to represent Him on earth.

They also prove that those ministers were to continue in regular succession, "even to the consummation of the world."

They are not only *ministers,* but *priests;* and as such, "dispensers of the mysteries of God."

Our Lord established in his own person the *eternal priesthood.* It was for this that he came into the world (Heb. v. 5, 6).

Priesthood necessarily supposes *sacrifice.* Again Our Lord offered himself, "The victim of his priesthood, and the priest of his victim" (St. Paulinus).

The sacrifice of Calvary was to be continued in an unbloody manner throughout the world: "From the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles; and *in every place* there is *sacrifice,* and there is offered to my name *a clean oblation"* (Mal. i. 11).

Our Lord offered this "clean oblation" for the first time on the eve of His Passion: "This is my body: this is my blood." Gave to His disciples the power to continue it: "Do this for a commemoration of me" (Luke xxii. 19, 20).

Thus were they constituted *priests* (cf. Manning, "Eternal Priesthood," i.) and made dispensers of the great mystery of the Eucharist.

It is especially through the Sacraments, mysterious channels of grace, that the priest is the "dispenser of the mysteries of God."

He blesses the nuptial bond; pours the regenerating waters of baptism upon the infant; restores the fallen sinner to the friendship of God; breaks the "Bread of Life" to innumerable souls that would otherwise faint by the way; comforts the dying, and speeds them on their way to their eternal home.

All this through no power nor merit of his own, but by the power and the grace of God, whose minister he is.

II. Yet he is *only a man.* Claims to be nothing more. St. Paul tells us what he is: "Every high priest *taken from among men,* is ordained for men, in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins. Who can have compassion on them that are ignorant, and that err; because he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And therefore he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins" (Heb. v. 1-3).

"Taken from among men, and compassed with infirmity." No false claim to special superiority. Like the average of his fellow men, except in so far as he is more successful in triumphing over the *infirmity* of the flesh, and adheres more closely to God, by the faithful observance of His law.

III. "Is ordained for men, in the things that appertain to God." Not simply of his own choice: "You have not chosen me; but I have chosen you" (John xv. 15).

"Neither doth any man take the honor to himself, but he that is called by God as Aaron was" (Heb. v. 4).

The call not given by miracle or special revelation. The Church does not claim *infallibility* in the selection of her priests. But she uses the utmost care and prudence.

Signs of vocation in the child: Innocence; frankness; intelligence; piety; love of the altar and the sanctuary; expressed desire to become a priest.

Development of vocation. Good home example and influence: Catholic primary and college education; absence of *undue influence* on the part of parents or relatives; watchful care, and kindly encouragement on the part of pastor or curate.

Lastly, seminary training, with years of study, trial, and discipline, during all which the candidate is constantly reminded of his freedom to enter a secular career, or "take the Lord for his portion."

After this long and careful trial Holy Mother Church gives but a qualified testimonial to the ordaining prelate, in presenting the candidate: "So far as human frailty permits me to know, I know and testify that he is worthy."

Long experience has shown that errors in decision are comparatively few in number.

Unfortunate exceptions are generally traceable, with more probability, to other causes than lack of *true vocation*.

Conclusion.—The Church makes no exaggerated or unreasonable claim for her priests. Claims only what St. Paul justly claimed for them; and admits willingly all that he admitted.

The claim amply justified by the blessings which God is constantly bestowing through the holy priesthood; and by the love, reverence, and confidence shown toward it by the faithful, and often by those without the fold.

Exhortation to an increased reverence for this divine character of the priesthood. Sincere gratitude to Our Lord for the inestimable blessing which He has given us through it.

Be mindful of the labors of the priest. But be mindful also that he is "compassed with infirmity"; that he has his trials, fatigues, and disappointments.

Duty therefore to pray earnestly for him, that he may triumph

over his own infirmity, and bear the great burden which he has freely taken upon his shoulders for the love of souls. "He is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God." Pray that he may be ever faithful to his task; and that he may always be respected as the "minister of Christ and the dispenser of the mysteries of God."

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS.

God Our Father.

"And because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father."—Gal. iv. 6.

Exordium.—The note of *joy* and *encouragement* sounded by St. Paul in to-day's Epistle is in striking contrast with that of *warning* by holy Simeon in the Gospel. And yet there is no contradiction or incompatibility between the two.

It is ever thus that our Holy Mother Church, following the example and teaching of our Divine Saviour, places before us the good things that God hath provided for us, and the *conditions* on which we may acquire and retain them.

Explanation of the circumstances that called forth from St. Paul the words of to-day's Epistle. (See Fouard's Life of St. Paul, vol. I. ch. xiii. Also à Lapide in loco.)

Briefly, they were as follows: The Galatians had recently been converted to Christianity by St. Paul, embracing it with great fervor and enthusiasm. But soon after his departure "an enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat."

False teachers arose and endeavored (with considerable success) to draw the new converts back to Judaism, by insisting on the sacredness of the Old Law, its divine origin, and the essential importance of its ceremonial observances.

They also made bitter personal accusations against St. Paul. He was an apostate Jew and an impostor. He knew very little about the doctrines he was preaching, and still less about their alleged author, Jesus, the false prophet of Nazareth.

St. Paul reproaches the Galatians with their fickleness, and vigorously refutes his calumniators (Ch. i. ii). Again reproaches the Galatians for their stupidity (Ch. iii. 1), in not understanding (after all they had seen and heard) that the efficacy of the Old Law, and the realization of the promises made to Abraham, depended entirely upon *faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ* (Ch. iii.).

Finally, in to-day's Epistle, the Apostle shows that under the Old Law the Jews were in a state of *tutelage,* while under the new they have the liberty and the rights of the *Sons of God.*

He explains the difference by a very simple comparison:

I. A child may be the destined heir to a great inheritance. But during his childhood he is placed under *tutors,* whom he must obey, as the servant obeys his master.

He is allowed neither liberty nor the use of his prospective inheritance, because he is incapable of using either properly.

He has to be taught the rudiments or elements of knowledge, in order to fit him for the duties of manhood.

So the Jews, though the destined inheritors of the promises made to Abraham, were, before the coming of Christ, *mere children,* relatively to God.

The Law was their pedagogue, or tutor (Ch. iii. 24). The ceremonial observances of the Law were, so to speak, *the elements* of their education, or preparation for the enjoyment of "the liberty of the glory of the *Sons of God*" (Rom. viii. 21).

As the heir, so long as he is a child, "is under tutors and governors until the time appointed by the father, so we," says St. Paul, "also,

when we were children, were serving *under the elements of the world,"* i. e., under the *letter,* or, as it were, the *alphabet* of the Law, without understanding its full meaning. "Just as children, under tutors, learn the alphabet and the elements of grammar, without understanding the meaning of words, much less the sentences into which they are constructed." (Sic SS. Jerome, Justinian, Augustine, and Anselm, apud à Lapide in loco.)

II. "But after *faith* is come, we are no longer under a pedagogue. For you are all the children *of God, by faith in Christ Jesus"* (Ch. iii. 25, 26).

Now, continues the Apostle, "When the fulness of time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made *under the Law,* that we might receive *the adoption of sons.* And *because you are sons,* God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying: ABBA, FATHER."

Wonderful change from the old dispensation!

In the Old Testament God is very rarely spoken of as *Father,* and then in terms little calculated to divest the Jews of their habitual fear and appalling reverence for the OMNIPOTENT JEHOVAH.

In the New Testament, on the contrary, this endearing, love-inspiring epithet is used more frequently in reference to God than in all other connections in which it is employed.

Our Lord constantly employs it thus, from His Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 16) to His last breath on the cross (Luke xxiii. 46).

Speaks of God even less frequently as *His* Father than as *Ours.* "*Your* Father knoweth what is needful for you. Thus shall you pray: *Our* Father who art in heaven" (Matt. vi. 8, 9).

"If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your Father* who is in heaven" (Matt. vii. 11).

"I ascend to *My* Father and to *your* Father" (John xx. 17).

All the inspired writers, especially St. Paul, insist upon the *Fatherhood of God,* through the *Brotherhood* of our divine Saviour. "For the Spirit himself giveth testimony that we are the *sons* of God. And if sons, *heirs* also; heirs indeed of God, and *joint heirs with Christ*" (Rom. viii. 16, 17).

God Himself acknowledges this divine affiliation, and to make us realize it He sends His Holy Spirit into our hearts, "Crying: *Abba, Father.*"

Conclusion.—A reminder once more that we owe all this to *the coming* of our divine Saviour. (An appropriate thought for Christmas time.) "God sent his Son, that *we* might receive the adoption of sons." But we shall *not* receive this adoption unless we *receive* our Lord as we should, with *faith, reverence, love.* "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, he gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name" (John i. 11, 12).

Exhortation.—To realize the blessing obtained for us by our divine Saviour. The dignity to which we have been raised as children of God and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. To love God with filial, confiding affection, because He is our FATHER.

Encouragement to begin the New Year well, heeding the earnest exhortation of St. Paul: "I beseech you, *brethren,* that you walk worthy of your vocation" (Eph. iv. 1).

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